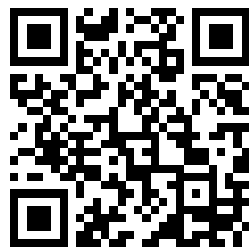


---

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google<sup>TM</sup> books

<https://books.google.com>



UC-NRLF



B 3 553 084

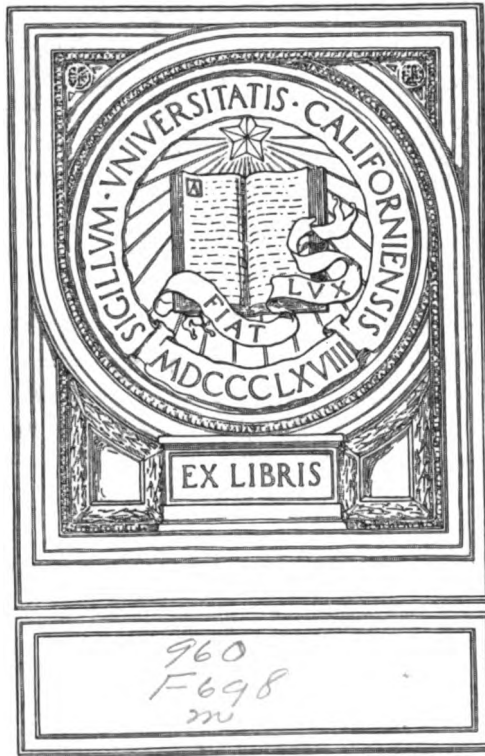


**MISTER BOSPHORUS  
AND THE MUSES  
BY  
FORD MADDOX FORD  
(FORD MADDOX HUEFFER)  
WITH DECORATIONS BY  
PAUL NASH**

c

5/v

10/6



250



## **MISTER BOSPHORUS AND THE MUSES**



**MISTER BOSPHORUS  
AND THE MUSES**  
OR A SHORT HISTORY OF  
**POETRY IN BRITAIN  
VARIETY ENTERTAINMENT  
IN FOUR ACTS**

WORDS BY  
**FORD MADDOX FORD**

MUSIC BY  
**SEVERAL POPULAR COMPOSERS**

WITH HARLEQUINADE, TRANSFORMATION  
SCENE, CINEMATOGRAPH EFFECTS, AND  
MANY OTHER NOVELTIES, AS WELL AS  
OLD AND TRIED FAVOURITES

DECORATED WITH DESIGNS  
ENGRAVED ON WOOD BY  
**PAUL NASH**

**DUCKWORTH & CO.**  
**3 HENRIETTA STREET, LONDON, W.C.**

70 .VIMU  
AIBOCHLIAO

*Published 1923*

*All Rights Reserved*

*Copyright in U.S.A. by Richard C. Badger, 100 Charles Street, Boston, Mass.*

*Made and Printed in Great Britain by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd.,  
London and Aylesbury.*

## CONTENTS

|                                                               | PAGE |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| ACT ONE, Sc. i. POOR NORTHERN MUSE . . . . .                  | 9    |
| Sc. ii. SHADOWS FROM BABYLON ENCROACH . . . . .               | 17   |
| ACT TWO, Sc. i. THE CLOSE-UP, OR THE POET'S BANQUET . . . . . | 39   |
| Sc. ii. THE CLASSIC MODES . . . . .                           | 53   |
| ACT THREE. THE ROMANTIC DRAMA, OR THE PROSE AGE . . . . .     | 71   |
| ACT FOUR. SIC ITUR . . . . .                                  | 95   |
| HARLEQUINADE . . . . .                                        | 101  |
| AFTER-HARLEQUINADE . . . . .                                  | 109  |
| TRANSFORMATION SCENE . . . . .                                | 117  |
| CODA . . . . .                                                | 124  |

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

**POORE B. BOSPHORUS.** A Poet.

Appearing also as Poultry Farmer, Pauper, Pantaloon and Parnassian.

**NORTHERN MUSE.**

Appearing also as Char-Lady, Duchess, etc.

**MR. BULFIN.** The Celebrated Critic—Of course you know his name.

Also as Pauper, Ploughman, Chorus, Censor, Clown, etc.

**ATHIS.** The Questionable Past.

Also as Chorus.

**HERCULES.** Arbiter.

Also as Workhouse Master, Policeman, etc.

**SOUTHERN MUSE.**

Also as Clarissa, La Cigale, A Sister, Columbine, etc.

**YOUNG ARLEQUIN.** A Brother.

**NINE YOUNG GENTLEMEN.**

**DEAN OF WESTMINSTER.** (1960 odd.)

**CERBERUS.**

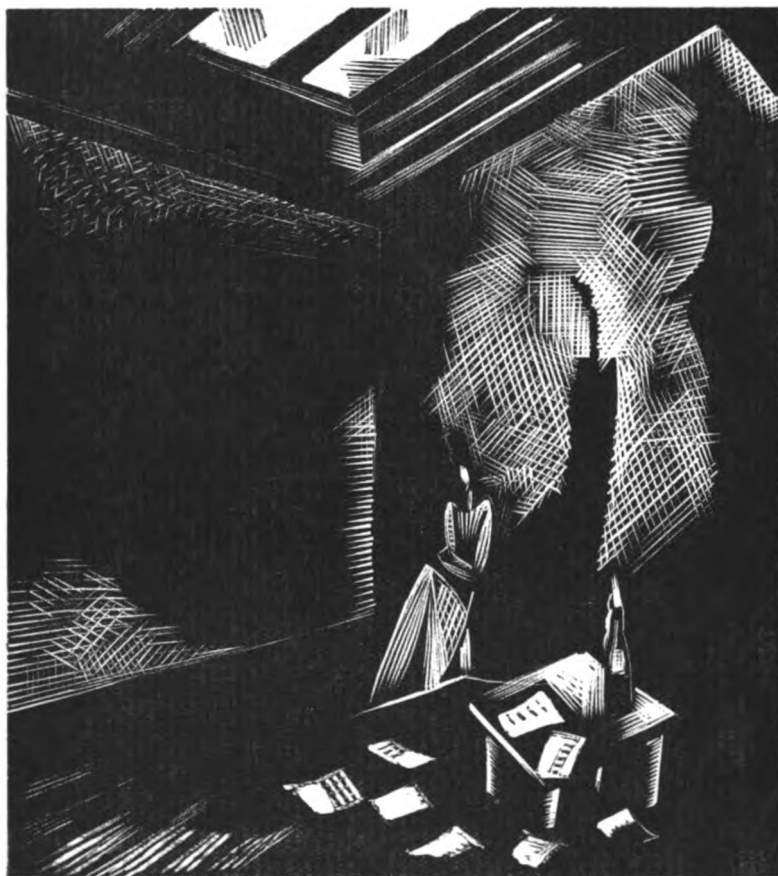
Pawnbroker, Publican, Undertaker, Crowd.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

|                                       |                        |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| PARNASSUS . . . . .                   | Cover                  |
| POOR NORTHERN MUSE . . . . .          | Act i, Scene 1         |
| ARTHUR IN THE BIRKEN HUT . . . . .    | „ „ 2                  |
| EXIT NORTHERN MUSE . . . . .          | „ „ 2                  |
| THE CLOSE-UP . . . . .                | Act ii, Scene 1        |
| DECORATION . . . . .                  | „ „ 2                  |
| ROMANTIC DRAMA . . . . .              | Act iii, Scene 1       |
| A ROAD, PERHAPS OVER A MOOR . . . . . | Act iv, Scene 1        |
| “GA-GA!” . . . . .                    | „ „ 3                  |
| DEATH OF BOSPHORUS . . . . .          | „ „ 4                  |
| WESTMINSTER ABBEY, 1960 ODD . . . . . | „ „ 5                  |
| ELYSIUM . . . . .                     | Act iv, Scene the last |

*ACT ONE*  
SCENE ONE  
POOR  
NORTHERN  
MUSE

Scene represents a garret predominantly furnished with shadows.  
Rain and wet leaves fall upon the skylight. Dusk.



ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

POOR NORTHERN MUSE

MR. BOSPHORUS SOLILOQUISES :

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

Our hands are cold and our luck's  
Out,  
Our stiffened thews refuse  
To bear us about,  
And who can wonder  
After the rain and the road  
Where the only gold about lies under  
Funeral yews.

And the road, wet ;  
And the rain, cold ;  
The last light in bands  
Thrown down the wet road ;  
Rein-stiffened hands,  
And the mare old,  
Too much of a load, and the harness rotten ;  
And our luck's . . .  
Out !

*(And don't forget,  
As you've hitherto forgotten,  
To shut up the ducks.  
There's a fox  
About !)*

HE ADDRESSES HIS MUSE:

Oh! In such a world begotten  
 You, from the shadows say :  
 " Set vine-leaves in your locks ! "  
 Remembering how, with a ticket purchased from Cook's,  
 A marigold stalk in your mouth  
 And several travel-books in a strap from your arm,  
 You travelled a sedulous fortnight in the warm  
 Warm South !  
 That you have never forgotten !

But remember  
 This is an evening in November,  
 And since October  
 We've lived cold-sober ;  
 We'd have had some ale if  
 We'd had a penny . . .  
 But we haven't had any.

*(It's getting late  
 And the ducks out !  
 And our luck's out  
 And the fox about.)*

How can a man sit with vine-leaves in his locks  
 With the fox  
 About ?  
 And the jolly grey bailiffs wait  
 Outside the gate !

Christ ! We would fetch in the bailiff  
 And give him his bellyful of ale if

You, poor Northern Muse !  
Begot in the black shadow of yews in the youth of the year  
And born when their berries turned sacrlet,  
Were only that patchouli'd harlot  
With a flower behind the ear. . . .

Ah ! You remember ! . . . Underneath the moon  
The thousand wantons treading the warm turf. . . .  
That poet's Velasquez hat, forked beard of gold,  
Guitar, coins clinking on the turf, the up-cocking arm  
Oh ! warm. . . . Oh ! warm. . . .  
The cloying eve !

## II

We've driven to-night from Sutton. . . .  
At some point underneath the yews a widow,  
A black-crêpe structure, mildewed, battered and old,  
Set on her head, held out a drab's pale palm  
And sang for largesse ! . . . A thin-nostrilled nose  
Dyed purple with the cold, a shining drop  
Perpetual at the end. . . .  
Yet she must once have revelled in warm beds  
With an adoring husband. Well, rain-wet,  
The craving hand out-stretched beneath the yews,  
She waited in the shadow. . . .

Oh ! My Muse

We drove to-night from Sutton  
Belching with Southdown mutton,  
And that bedraggled harlot stood in the ooze  
Beneath the churchyard yews. . . . "Curse me," I said,  
"I've a ten-bob note in my waistcoat, but be damned  
If with frozen finger-tips I open my coat  
To find that note. . . ." So I didn't unbutton !

## III

In the warmed, moth-blue sky the foolish moon  
 Is over-arched by birches. Fête-champêtre !  
 How came our party here ? In an automobile  
 Or drawn by shining mules ? Do you remember ?  
 " Nay, love, not I." Maybe in a painted barge  
 Over a glass lagoon beneath the moon,  
 What does it matter ? . . . Leaning overboard  
 Broad-bosomed, voluptuous, black, copper-haired  
 And white-skinned women toss with languid hands  
 Coins to the muse of the poet. In the South  
 Where the air breeds music and the moonlight, love ;  
 And the foot with an arching instep taps the sand  
 To the distant cymbals, and the coins lie, broad,  
 Moon-beaten discs the Poet's muse just brushes  
 With a pointed shoe-tip. . . . You, in Quaker grey  
 —And you were younger then !—you, with a finger  
 Still pointing heavenwards from your pursing lips,  
 Softly upbraid the nonchalant occupants  
 Of our gliding barge. For Thoughtlessness ! Said you :

"To-night's," you said, " like July  
 A tepid eve, but truly  
 That Muse must use patchouli,  
 There's rouge upon her cheeks.  
 Her lover's dark sombrero's  
 Brim may conceal the Hero's  
 True Chastity, but Eros,  
 I rather think, bespeaks !  
 White marble truly quarried  
 Is symbol of the married. . . .  
 But ARE they duly married ? " . . .

So speaks. . . .

So spoke the Northern Muse to unlistening ears.  
Now ; finger-tips chapped and gnarled with the chapel pews  
She's scrubbed and scrubbed and her poor widow's cap-strings  
Spotted with soapy water, from the shadows,  
She whispers : " Set the vine-leaves in your locks ! "  
God help us !

    In the South the sombrero'd poet,  
His harlot having gathered the scattered coins,  
Rose slothfully and stretching out a hand  
White but not overwashed beneath the benevolent moon,  
Shouts out his indolent verse, accustomed rhymes  
POUR for AMOUR and PURE to match AZURE  
And a scratch on the guitar, a diamond flash  
In the birchen shadow. Gesture with the hat  
And so to bed beside his harlot. . . . Ah !  
In the scented azure night.



*ACT ONE*  
SCENE TWO  
SHADOWS  
FROM BABYLON  
ENCROACH  
OR  
THE LONDON MANNER

Scene represents same garret still more richly provided with shadows.  
Later a tallow dip lights itself.



ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

SHADOWS FROM BABYLON ENCROACH

THE MUSE ; MR. BOSPHORUS <sup>1</sup>

*Poverty I'll bear till kingdom come : for ten  
Or twice ten thousand incarnations. That's  
My poor old job. But what I can't a-bear  
Is sordid poems. You've got one in your ed  
This blessed moment. I can feel the fit  
A-comin' on me. Ark at me h'accent ! Ho !  
That and your plum-leaf gold on the turf by the path.*

Poor Northern Muse,

Wouldst give me notice ? Sudden light  
Now bursts upon me. Who was that by the yews  
Singing ABIDE WIV ME with a gin-ny voice ?  
It perfumed Hesper ! Whose the familiar trunk,  
Tin, grained to look like varnished pot-house deal ?  
Whose derelict umbrella stuck thro' the straps ?  
You'd cut your lucky ! I can't say I wonder.

*You're speakin like the great Victorian poets.*

To what am I indebted for your return ?

*Like Mr. Patmore or Lord Tennyson  
You're speakin. But I know what's in yore ed ;  
I feel it comin on me. Sordid poems.  
Yore Rehelisum !*

<sup>1</sup> Speeches of Mr. Bosphorus in Roman type ; speeches of Muse in italics.

Realism, Muse,  
Is my last Manner. These experiments . . .

*Three drops of peppermint on sugar. H'ot !  
Like our Victoria loved. You know what I mean. . . .  
I can't abide no more. When I was a gel . . .*

Your thoughts, dear Muse, I know are pure as snow ;  
You must excuse the language that I force  
Your tongue to speak. My mind is set on making  
An income in the Great Victorian mode.  
Unfortunately though my mind is set  
On imitating Patmore and Lord Tennyson  
As the fashion is to-day, my subconscious self  
WILL dwell on the seamier sides of spacious times. . . .  
Say Clerkenwell in the fifties.

*Them was days  
For immemorial moanings of the tide  
And murmurous hum of bees. And gin was thrippence  
The double tot and Mr. Spurgin preached  
In the city Tempil. When I was a gel  
I lived with Uncle Pore in Clarkenwell  
In the Crimeeyun Wower. E took in Lodgers  
N Mr. Tennyson wrote something lovely !  
Fair treat it was. We ad a master saddler  
In the top back best. A quiet man, till work  
F'r th' sojers drove im off is cokernut !  
E went to Witeall, drew a twelmonth's pay  
In gold n brought it ome in a Gladstone bag  
N cut is froat on the top-back-bedroom landing.  
N is blood n the Gold  
Poured down meyuncle's staircase like in winter  
When the pipe's Burst.*

*N meyuncle said :*

*" Sterling is always sterling : it will pass  
At a pinch at the pub in the Mews."  
So it did : so it did. N no questions !  
N gin at thrippence. Same's Er Majesty ad !  
You know my meaning.*

*But your plum-leaf gold—*

*I know you gotter be a poet. But  
It turns meyinwuds : coming suddin like  
In the moonlight on them thickuns n arfsquids !  
(Let's go to Bloomsb'ry, dearie. You n Me !  
In a furnished bed n sit I'd do you proper.  
It's ony writin immemorial bees  
Institut cuss words in them broke-up lines)  
I yadn't theyart to leave my Bosphorus,  
After all these years n years without givin notice,  
My grey-aired poet. . . .  
Three drops on a lump of sugar f'm the pub  
In the Mews. The same Victoria ad ;  
You know my meaning. . . . Mr. Tennyson  
N California Bees. I never eld  
With drugs. Not Hi. H'im none of your fast gels.*

*Poor Boreal Muse,*

*You need not stick it till I cut my throat  
And you draw the insurance. I will now unbutton  
And write a poem worth a ten-bob note :  
In Clerkenwell you'll find an Editor. . . .*

*There ain't no Editors in Clerkenwell !*

*There should be.*

*Dearie, you are wet and cold !*

*You cannot write sweet poems in that state !  
You're thinking, more refined, on Literature.  
I feel it on my tongue-tip.*

Boreal Muse,  
Your train will leave at ten ; for Bloomsbury  
Where you have got a job. I know it Muse !

*Nine nice young poets with such sweet moustaches  
In an old house in Lincoln's Inn. An old  
White-panelled house with Adams ceilings. Ah !  
Just Heaven after all I've stood with you  
And other poets back to Villon's time !  
You can't write ten-bob poems now. You're old :  
And stiff and wet and sober.*

True ! My hands,  
My hands are cold and my luck's out ;  
And my stiffened thews refuse  
Any longer to bear me about  
After the cold and the rain of the road.  
But damn ! I'm a man ; I've a will, and can make 'em  
Slip and stagger an hour yet by the pond  
In the sting of the rain, coaxing the ducks to bed  
And then come in and write your ten-bob lyric. . . .

*No Editor in Bloomsbury will take it !  
I know the kidney !*

Muse ! My luck is out  
Beyond  
All reasonable computation. That's  
The luck of the game. . . .

*The game is nowise fit  
For a tender and clinging female. What I've stood  
In the last forty years. This is THE END !*

Dear Muse, you have been Patience' sainted self  
In monumented Immortality.  
Is it Coventry or Mr. Tennyson  
Stinging your memory to-night ? Or maybe Wordsworth !

(Did Wordsworth ever have the bailiffs wait  
 By the Windermere gate? You never tell me;  
 You, most discreet of chars!) You did their washing,  
 Counting their dirty linen in the baskets:  
 But not a word; I know the lot you've stood  
 In the great polysyllabled, immortal Age  
 Before you did MY charing. Listen, Widow!  
 (I know you were that widow; your tin trunk packed  
 Beneath the yews!)

*Now Mr. Bosphorus. . . .*

You MEANT to cut your lucky. I don't blame you!

*I once found rhymes and polished up the lutes  
 For Walter von der Vogelweide.*

Beast!

*I smoothed the bed for Heine.*

Curse your past!

I swear I'll cut your bastard — throat  
 If you torment me.

*There were POETS then*

*In Northern woods and Boulevards Montparnasse.*

*Unz hat diu Winter*

*Geschadet uberall;*

*Heide unde walde*

*Syn alle nu kal. . . .*

Stop whining, you!

You mean to say I have not Vogelweide's  
 Nightingales' love-call to the tickled lute!  
 You dare to mean Heine was never flippant!  
 Illiterate Times Reviewer, Northern Muse,  
 Pew-opener-souled, drop-nosed. . . .

*I was not once !*

*I came to you a girl in Quaker grey,  
You made me what you would : I made with you  
The Grand Tour in that fortnight : influenced you  
As a coy maiden should to admire what's fitting  
In the dangerous South : Canova's marble statues  
Of maids with doves for Keepsakes and Last Suppers.  
Yes. I was pliable : you could have made me  
Like a Victorian bridesmaid and remained  
Yourself quite manly in the purer sense !*

*. . . You could have set to metre  
The Organ-pealings of the Albert-Hall,  
Retaining SELF-RESPECT ! Why Mr. Browning . . .*

Let's hear of Browning !

*Ah ! h-h ! His girl told me  
He slept in silk beside dear Mrs. Browning  
Like twin-doves in a nest : a pigeon pair !  
But you treat words like a bully. Mr. Maccoll  
Once told me . . .*

Mr. Who ?

*He edited  
The ATHENÆUM in the Nineties.*

Oh !

The man who wore black gloves at garden parties !

*He told me you would never do . . . in his sleep !  
It broke my heart.*

Come, come, old girl. No tears !  
You'll go to Bloomsbury by the ten-fifteen  
With a ten-bob poem tucked within your glove.  
I'll stagger out in the dark and shut the ducks  
Beyond the vixen's reach.

*She's had your ducks  
This half an hour and more !*

Oh well ! Oh well !  
Come knife ; come gallows, as your ballad says,  
To-morrow to the workhouse or the gaol !

*Oh, Mr. Bosphorus. . . .*

A rotten poet,  
That's what I am, and as a poultry farmer  
More rotten yet. But unrepentant. Still  
I'm unrepentant " Biting Bosphorus "  
With the grizzled snout. You stand in the shadows  
Sniffing like Niobe ! But off you go  
At ten to Bloomsbury. Listen to me :  
I'll write you now your poem : that you'll sell  
In that wilderness of concrete packing-cases  
Neath the lamp-lit fog of pawnshops !

*You can't write  
A poem worth ten bob. There's not a paper  
In London Town would pay ten bob for verse  
Signed " Bosphorus."*

I will not sign it, Muse,  
Or sign it " Tupper " ! Then for your last debauch !  
Old Tom unsweetened in the gaslit bar  
O' the pub in Bloomsb'ry Mews ! It means just twenty  
Sixpenny goes ! Before fourteen they were thrippence :  
And ten bob bought you forty ! Oh these times  
Are very evil. Oh !

*It means but ten !  
The double-tot's a shilling !*

How her voice  
Swells with the computation !

*Cruel Poet !*

*Oh bad, mad Biting Bosphorus ! Full well  
You know I crave no sperrits but sweet poems  
Dropped upon sugar, honey-dropping, slow !  
Those that the late Queen countenanced. Dull-drowsy  
Polysyllabic lines of cedar lawns  
And th' immemorial moanings of the surf  
Round Arthur's Isles and dim-aired libraries  
Of a million books, calf-backed with covers gilt !  
The great Tradition that is come again !  
Albert shall come again !*

What light now breaks !

Not in the East ! The Western Central skies !

Muse ! Listen ! Wait !

In Bloomsbury there stands a packing-case :  
Bent souls before it with umbrellas up  
Do fight the hastening gusts on the asphalte space  
Between the railings and that portico  
That speaketh Athens. No ! The Madeleine !  
On the concrete packing-case a pudding-dish. . . .

*Oh ! Mr. Bosphorus : Blaspheming, rash  
To speak so slightingly of the great Museum  
Whence many thousand epics of the Morte  
D'Arthur have issued. You have done it now !  
Apollo's bolts shall smite thee ere the portals  
Of the Workhouse door enfold thee !*

No, No : Muse

Not classical : Elisabethan strains  
Be on thy lips to aid me with the lyric  
That soon shall come. Let's pull ourselves together. . . .  
On the concrete packing-case a pudding-dish  
And 'neath the dish booklined and airless dimness

The very light being chastened. Quills o' the goose  
 Scratch in that half-calf air on foolscap blue  
 The Great Tradition! Now, dear Muse! Now sing!  
 A sample of Arthurian Legend, I  
 Harkening your reedy wavering tones will dream  
 Derivative harpings that the grey goose-quill  
 Shall indite on foolscap blue and ten round shillings  
 Shall be your meed when you successful sell  
 The honey-dropping lines.

*Apollo Aid!*

(SINGING)

*" King Arthur was a goodly fere  
 His breeches cost him half a crown  
 He thought them sixpence all too dear  
 Thereat he called " . . .*

*The little children sing  
 Those verses in the cowslip-diapered fields.  
 We must have children in our Bloomsbury songs  
 In their little night-gowns. I have other rhymes  
 Compact for children!*

Good Muse, quaver on!  
 Your voice is like the sawmill that we heard  
 In the Flanders town called Locre!

*Here's a song  
 I heard in childhood . . .*

(MUSE SINGS: "*When good King Arthur ruled the leal.*")

Your voice, dear Muse, now comes  
 From a great distance. Slumber softly seals  
 My once too ambient spirits. Listen, Muse!  
 Strike up, good psalteries, an Arthurian strain.  
 God keep the issue. (Make it half a sovereign!)

(Tallow dip lights itself. A goose-quill floats through sky-light into poet's hand ; blue sheets of foolscap before his nose. There descend cardboard walls gleaming dimly with half-calf book-backs as in visions : Lady, copper-haired, of comfortable embonpoint, in emerald, mercerised cotton, long-sleeved, bends over poet's shoulder, exhibiting at first complacency, afterwards perturbation and gradually anger and disgust. As these moods deepen her gown turns to black ; her hair is concealed beneath a crape bonnet ; the book-backs fade gradually, permitting the bare rafters to show through.)

(Mr. Bosphorus writes. As he does so the words, projected by a cinematograph machine, are thrown on back cloth.)

A goodly wight was Arthur, King,  
 And lovèd shaws where wood-birds sing,  
 And little loved what in Courts they sing  
     Where law-men walken heavy.  
 He met a maid by yon green spring  
 And she plaguèd him aboon a thing  
 In merry, mischief-miching Spring  
     When birken woods grow leavy.

Her hair was red and her sleeves were green,  
 Y-laced and the white flesh shone between  
 White, white the flesh, green, green the een  
 That glinted above her shoulder !  
 And every day when it came to e'en  
 Quod Arthur : " Would I had bolder been ! "  
 To leave his court with its silken sheen  
     He would he had been bolder.



She lured him ben with a flick of her chin,  
To her birken hut she lured him in,  
But aye he stroked the beard on his chin ;  
    His fame he wadna blacken.  
Her een they did like marbles spin,  
Green, green her sleeves, milk-white her chin :  
She lay and laughed but he darena begin  
    To love her in the bracken.

She led him by day on the honey-bee moor :  
Sang she : " I am ne rich ne poor,  
Yet suitors beg at my birken door :  
    I ask ne ring ne money ! "  
He craved her sair in shine and shour,  
But his mouth aye folded grim and dour ;  
He fain wad fa' to the shameless lure  
    Of her red lips sweet as honey.

He followed her by the foaming stream ;  
 He followed under the white moonbeam  
 Where the ravens cry and the eagles scream  
     Across the land of Faery !  
 Till they were come to the Westland's rim :  
 He caught her waist and the blood gan stream.  
 A poison'd knife in the white moon's beam  
     He had taken for his dearie !

So fared he back to Camelot :  
 To his book forgot and his lore forgot.  
 White, white his beard and his black lips hot,  
     His black lips hot with fever.  
 His goshawks ne hounds they knew him not ;  
 Queen Gwennifer by him forgot  
 Had played sweet leman with Lancelot.  
     Tis thus this world wags ever !

(Taper sinks to a pin-prick.)

*That's torn it !*

*You think that stuff like Heine. IT IS NOT !  
 Heine was NEVER flippant. That verse is !  
 Flippant and lecherous, it libels Heroes,  
 Your imitation Vogelweide with  
 The sordidness of Villon !*

Hang it, Muse !

Your old employers WILL come creeping in.  
 The fault's more yours than mine. Had you served Tupper  
 Or Lewis Morris, had you held the thought  
 Of them whilst I wrote. . . .

*Our Queen Victoria*

*Would have turned purple pale if Tennyson  
 Had read to her verse like that ; the chaste Young Person  
 Have vanished wraith-like from the drawing-room*

*To faint in the conservatory amongst  
White arum lilies ! Mr. Ruskin would  
Have smote you to the ground—at least with language !*

*Did Queen Victoria*

*—Your verse suggests it—ever flirt with Arthur,  
The Duke of Wellington ? did good Prince Albert  
Week-end in Paris ? that your verse implies  
Beyond denial. Bad, mad Bosphorus,  
Victorian bards addressed them to the Manly !  
The truly manly : To the child in thought  
And intellect. . . .*

*And if you think, my Mr. Bosphorus,  
That you can bilk me of my ten-bob note !  
You promised me ten bob, bilkin' pore gels !  
If I stop here till Christmas. 'Elp ! Police !  
I'll tear the youse down.*

#### THAT'S THE NOTE, DEAR MUSE !

The true Victorian note. You help me much  
Towards infantile lyrics. Keep to that strain  
Of unspotted morals, of philanthropists,  
Great towns arising, peaceful penetrations  
Of far-flung Commerce ; of the Albert Hall ;  
Great Exhibitions : the White Queen who said :  
“ Be ye as little children ” to her soldiers.

*The Yurl of Shaftesbury went off is nut !*

Beautiful ! Beautiful ! Thrice happy Nine,  
You soon shall dry-nurse. Nine young, blameless poets  
In Lincoln's Inn, white panels and Adams ceilings  
And the ninth part of my Muse to inspire each pen.  
Their fortune's made !

*In iteen forty odd  
The seventh Earl of Shaftesbury, K.G.,  
Thinking of little children in the coal-mines,  
Went off is nut.*

That's it ! You keep to the children.  
The children of the Tennysonian Age ;  
The great philanthropists. Keep all on thinking :  
I'll write such a lullaby. . . .

*H'im thinkin' ard !  
They whipped the naked nippers into the mines,  
N starvin gels of six to the cotton gins  
N thus built up our Hempire. Mr. Bright,  
The people's Tribune,  
Sed in the Youse of Commons : " This great Kingdom  
Could not with Commerce belt the spinning globe  
Or spread the light amongst the Heathen's Darkness  
Wivout them kids in mines n the Twelve Our Die ! "  
Good Mister Roebuck, e said : " Jus the sime !  
Eer ! Eer ! Oorore ! " N Mr. Stuart Mill  
In is Political Economy*

*Page seventy-seven, Bohn's Edition, wrote :  
" A child who fastens on the head of pins  
One hundred times a minute will repeat  
For several successive hours an action  
Requiring several motions all distinct."  
N they kep them at it : Oh, John Stuart Mill,  
I think you are the wickedest soul in Hell.  
N Shaftesbury went off is nut, is Bill  
Being thrown out by the Youse ; n all his friends  
They cut im ; n they stoned im in the streets  
N Mr. Bright n Mr. Roebuck cheered ;  
The people's Tribunes. " Angels in the House."*

*Our Patmore wrote. Chaste Mr. Patmore wrote  
 Of tea laid on the lawn n hissing teapots  
 N marriage settlements n snow-pure brides :  
 N whipped is kids arf dead n wrote 'em poems :  
 N Good Lord Tennyson wrote cuddly stuff  
 About Excalibur n the strenth of ten  
 Because our hearths are pyore ; n red is verses  
 To Queen Victorier in the Drawing Room !  
 God curse the carneying humbugs ! Rot their guts !  
 Tear down their houses with the blood-mixed mortar  
 N wipe their memories f'm off this earth  
 Exep fer Shaftesbury Avenue. Stoned in the streets  
 E was. O gin galore n muffin bells !  
 Albert shall come again n Mr. Patmore  
 N Stanley Dean of Westminster n all  
 The Great Tradition n the middle Class !*

Now swells within me the right flatulence :  
 I'll write of little children as philanthropists  
 Wrote, and the poets of that right-filled age !  
 Hum Mr. Brahms's Wiegenlied, dear Muse !  
 I'll set you down a sweet child's lullaby  
 At once. . . .

(Slow music, Brahms. Muse hums.)

*Ti-tum. Ti-tum-ti-tum-ti-  
 Ti-tumpery, tumpery, tum !*

Taper flares up disclosing a Nursery. Cardboard walls in bright distemper. An immense dolls' house. Frieze of rabbits ; great quantities of plasticine. A blackboard on green cork-carpet. High nursery fender ; before it St.

Bernard dog in Berlin wool, life-sized ; perched on fender  
two dummies in long flannel night-gowns, peroxide-flaxen  
curls to waist.

Mr. Bosphorus in black morning coat with lavender trousers  
writing on blackboard. Over his shoulder looks Nurse.  
In white ; copper locks under broad-winged cap. As Mr.  
Bosphorus writes she crosses her arms, compresses lips,  
swaying head dubiously. The taper gradually sinks : the  
figure of Mr. Bosphorus diminishes and grows more shabby.  
Cinematograph machine projects on to blackboard word after  
word of following verses :

“ The sheep that browse the heavens  
Gone nidding, noddering home ;  
The kine from all the ocean fields  
To the dairying stools being come :  
With the eiderdown above the knee  
And the rushlight by the head,  
Mousily, mousi-mousily,  
One white little lamb’s a-bed !

And, drifting from the heavens  
And flittering, fluttering home  
Across the butter-cowslip fields  
The seven white messengers come ;  
Seven lily-petals brush the knee,  
Seven pinions tent the head,  
Where drowsily, drowsi-drowsily  
One white little soul’s a-bed ! ”

(The great St. Bernard gets up and is solemnly sick on the  
hearthrug. The only light now comes from fireplace.)

1ST CHILD DUMMY : I call it rotten !

2ND DO.

Let's get back to Freud.

Good Doctor Wilkinson is due to-morrow

To ask about our dreams.

1ST CHILD DUMMY :

We'll startle him

About the golden cup ! . . .

(The fire goes out.)

*You hear !*

*You hear the Critics, Bosphorus, N.B.G.*

*THAT verse won't fetch*

*Not two half-crowns from Christmas cracker makers.*

*Be MUCH more vacant. Try, try, try, again !*

I am quite ready !

*MUCH more vacant still.*

*Think of the literary journals ; try*

*Seed catalogues ; they've adjectives for flowers !*

*The lyric lilt !*

*Don't think of music or your intricate rhythms !*

*NOT THAT. I've still ten minutes. Come ! Oh man !*

*The lyric lilt !*

What IS a lyric, Muse.

Cite me the best Authority of to-day !

*A lyric is a beanfeast's monument,*

*Memorial of dead imbecility*

*To some subconscious stunt. . . .*

I see, I see !!

Give me some paper !

*You've no need for that !*

*Just spout out anything : winds ; sedges, love,*

*Or dandelions, moorhens, and the moon.*

*I've seven minutes ! Hurry ! Oh ! this man !*

(Bosphorus intoning : Ore rotundo.)

I could not love thee by the book  
Nor kiss thee to the sound of lutes :  
The dandelion's frail parachutes  
Blow swift across the sunlit brook !

The moorhens chirp amid the sedge  
Beside the reedy lakelet's marge,  
The great cloud-canopies sailing large  
Defile above the mountain's edge.

Without blue heaven spread above  
I could not kiss, I dare not love !

*I have known worse. It's not the lyric cry  
Par excellence ; but it might fetch ten bob  
From Mr. Bulfin when he's had his lunch  
If I signed it for you in an altered hand !  
Well ! I must leave you*

So good night, dear Muse.

Whole choirs of Patmores see thee to the train,  
No Angel's left in my house.

(Through the complete darkness, the light of an opening  
door shows at the back ; sounds of a tin trunk being dragged  
down several steps.)

No Muse ! No Muse !

She that lived with me for a mort of years  
Has left me coldly. I must write vers libre,  
If ever any verses more at all !

(Door reopens. Silhouette of black crêpe bonnet shows  
against livid light.)

*Mr. Bosphorus !  
The cowshed's full of unprinted manuscript.  
You don't know how expensive paper is :  
And my young gentlemen near the shaving stage !  
You take my meaning ! Just to wipe their razors.  
Nine take a lot : you know the ways they have,  
The little angels !*

Take it all, dear Muse.  
To-morrow to the workhouse !

(The sound of a closing door. Complete darkness.)





*ACT TWO*  
SCENE ONE  
THE CLOSE-UP  
OR  
THE POET'S BANQUET



## ACT THE SECOND

TIME : *Present day.*

Afterwards : XVIIIth Century

„ XXth „

„ VIIIth „

„ XIVth „

„ XVIth „

Also IVth Century B.C.

and many others

PLACE (Fore-stage) : *Any Workhouse.*

Afterwards : Twickenham-Athens

„ Scandinavia

„ Meads outside Westminster

„ Painted Gallery at Greenwich

Also Athens and many Other Places

ON SCREEN : *Clerkenwell.*

## SCENE I

### THE CLOSE-UP, OR THE POET'S BANQUET

*During complete darkness white forms of scene-shifters are dimly observable. They are removing (brown-paper) rafters from white-washed wall, back of garret. This thus forms cinematograph curtain. The throwing on to this screen of picture of British Museum illuminates with reflected light figure of Mr. Bosphorus seated on workhouse bench. He wears corduroy coat, much-washed brown duck trousers, grey flannel shirt, red tie, and pudding-basin*

*hat. From time to time he takes from one pocket small cylinders of shag tobacco, which he empties into other pocket. He retains pieces of paper. Frequent relays of lady visitors bring him little rolls of tobacco. Mr. Bosphorus does not smoke. He nevertheless touches the rim of his hat.*

*An aged pauper—Bulfin by name—hobbles to sit beside Mr. Bosphorus.*

*(On the screen within a rosetted frame appear the words :*

From  
Birth-place  
to  
Museum

How  
Poets Live  
FEAT  
Uring Mr. BOSPHORUS and  
MUSA POORE  
(Rotten Films Ltd.)

This is replaced by a living portrait of Mr. Bosphorus. It grins imbecilely ; screws up its eyes ; starts back as if from a suddenly presented onion ; exhibits completely toothless jaws, and vanishes.)

*Living Characters on Fore-stage : MR. BOSPHORUS ; PAUPER BULFIN*

MR. B. :      Sitting here quiet in the sun  
                  While the quiet moments run  
                  In the still warm air . . .

*(On screen : An immense, pinkish, living portrait of the Northern Muse. She wears a girl-guide's turned-up hat, has at first a blinking and uncertain air, but, gaining confidence, waves a plump hand to someone presumably in the gods.)*

PAUPER BULFIN : 'Ere ! Wot's that 'ere ?

(*On screen : Northern Muse smiles. On Fore-stage : Pauper falls off seat.*)

MR. B. (*helping him to rise*) :

I have attained to what I often wished for.

P. BULFIN : What's the matter with the Workhouse wall ?

What's the matter with the master's wall ?

Who's been paintin on the master's wall.

B. : Without any hope at all ;

Without any scope at all

For any fear at all !

(*Northern Muse vanishes from screen.*)

P. BULFIN : There ain't no paintin theere at all !

It musterbin the sun !

B. : The land beyond the moon beneath the sun.

Warm death !

(*On screen appear the words :*

THE POET VISITS HIS BIRTHPLACE.)

P. BULFIN : There's writin on the wall !

B. : A prison there are no bars in.

Mene, mene, tekeli, upharsin !

P. BULFIN : There's writin on the wall !

Look ere : writin on the Master's wall !

I can't read writin. But it's on the wall !

(*Inscription vanishes.*)

Ugh ! There ain't no writin there at all !

B. : To be no more missed from the familiar hall !

To be no more tantalised by cup and ball

In the hands of Fate. No rise : no fall !

Not any more at all !

(*On screen* : A London street in an obviously poor quarter. Old, small houses. Shops beneath. Two shops shown, preternaturally large. One is a pawnbroker's, the three golden balls protruding ; the other an undertaker's, coffin-lids standing outside. The film shifts ; pawnbroking establishment vanishing, the undertaker's seems to jump, rather unsteadily, at the spectator.)

P. BULFIN : Gorblimey ! Cawfins ! Cawfins jumpin at me !  
It's the delirium tremens !

B. : Bulfin, calm yourself !  
These are a poet's dreamings !

P. BULFIN : That all ? Strite ?  
But look at the cawfins. . . . Oh ! By Ju ! who's that ?

(*On screen* : Mr. Bosphorus in pauper's dress ; disproportionately large on account of difficulty of focussing.)

B. : It's only I myself. Take it calmly, Bulfin !

P. BULFIN : If you can take it calmly, I can too.  
I suppose I can. Oo ! There's the jump again !

(*On screen* : The picture has appeared to jump nearer ; the house-front as if toppling forward so as to make plain the gilt inscription : MICHAEL POORE. UNDERTAKER. Inside window two framed inscriptions, the one : *Economical Funerals* ; the other : *Lodgings for Single Men*. The house drops down to display a tablet showing the words : *In this house was born Poore B. Bosphorus. London County Council. Poet. L87. Chairman, Sir POLYDORE KAHN*. The picture appears to jump to a great distance, revealing the pawnbroker's establishment on left and displaying a public-house on the right. Back of Bosphorus in foreground. Picture jumps out.)

P. BULFIN : I have seen better films.

B. : You are a critic ?

P. BULFIN : I never. I've lived respectably with my  
Old woman till the day they brought me here.

B. : Your pardon. It gets livelier later on.  
Here you've seen life from the cradle to the grave.  
My cradle came from the pawnshop ; my obsequies  
Perforce will be inexpensive ; public-houses  
I never entered much ; at times ; at times !  
My mother used to get my pre-natal Stout  
From that establishment, which lends it interest.  
She had a quart a day ; and gin at threepence !  
The short and simple annals . . .

P. BULFIN : Stop that talkin  
And tell me what it says. . . .

(*On screen* the words :

TOUCHING MEETING WITH ERSTWHILE HUMBLE  
RETAINER. NURSE'S DELIGHT.)

B. : *The poet and his Muse.* That's what it says.

P. BULFIN : What is a poet ? I've heard tell of poets,  
But never rightly knew what poets meant.

B. : You're no worse off, then, than most other men,  
A poet is a moment's . . .

P. BULFIN : Stop that talkin. . . .  
The same old street !

(*On screen* : Street, after preliminary stutterings, reappears.  
Hurried passengers with improbable gift of speed. A police-  
man's back ; improbably white-gloved hands folded behind  
him. An eminently, even improbably respectable Widow,  
crêpe bonnet, white apron, passes alone across picture. She  
has on her arm a large basket ; basket is filled with paper  
scrolls. From foreground starts forward Picture—Bosphorus  
towards Widow. There intervene a number of Young Men :  
they wear black morning coats, lightish, improbably elegant  
trousers and light grey Trilby hats ; they twirl incipient

moustaches and regard Picture-Bosphorus agitatedly ;  
crooked sticks are on their arms.)

B. : The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling. . . .

P. BULFIN : That I have heard before. I'm sure I have.

B. : Without a doubt. Verses all heard before  
Make up our great tradition of to-day !  
Pew-opener you ! To the piano I !

P. BULFIN :  
'Ere wats-all-this ! I've got a nuniform !  
A goleliced cap n little flashing lantern !  
Wheredyor armonium come from ?

B. : The poet's mind  
In a fine frenzy rolled. . . .

P. BULFIN : It's not so bad !  
A job I've often wanted ! Showin gents  
N cuddly females into empty seats.  
Gord bless ther luvvin wies.  
Thrippeny seats this wy ! Sixpences 'ere !  
Now you beyive yourselves ! I see you ! No  
This inte no squirt ! It's disinfectants. Garn !

*On the workhouse table of solid, scrubbed deal which has become  
a piano, Mr. B. vamps : It's a long, long way, &c.*

B. (singing throatily) :

A poet's life is very dreary :  
He thinks from ten till ten ;  
He's weary, weary, weary-weary !  
No life for gentlemen !

(*The screen performs another Close-up or whatever is the  
technical term. Pawnbroker's shop jumps at audience.  
Above the door, on fascia, appear the words : P. Morgan :  
Antiques taken in Pledge or Purchased. Eminently Re-  
spectable Widow is seen entering this establishment, basket  
on arm.*)

B. (singing) :

Good-bye tongs and basin !  
 Silver watch and spoons !  
 Poets have to keep on writing  
 Ten thousand afternoons !

(*The screen* closes up still more. Through iridescent and wavering window the Eminently Respectable Widow is seen to take scrolls from basket and hand them to Gentleman behind counter. Gentleman exhibits signs at first of interest, then of disgust.)

P. BULFIN : Thrippeny seats this wy ! Sixpennies 'ere.

*At piano Mr. B. vamps : " Spring Song " by Chopin or by someone else.*

B. (singing) :

Put me within a climate where the palms are high !  
 Let my liquid lovenotes stroke the star-bespangled  
 sky !  
 Pour out liquid amethysts in wine ; and charm,  
 Charm, charm, charm me where the air breathes warm !

(*The screen* exhibits legend : A HARD PURCHASER.  
 WIDOW TRIES TO SAVE HOME BY PARTING WITH  
 VALUED TREASURES.

Within pawnbroker's shop Gentleman behind counter is seen to receive paper scroll from hands of widow. Gentleman unfolds scroll and reads.

*The screen* (gone black) exhibits words ; in white handwriting :

*In May when all the year is young  
 And Truth exudes from Shepherd's tongue  
 Dame Fortune mounts her ladder's rung !  
 Come play with me, my sweeting !*

*The screen* exhibits legend : POET'S EMOTION.

*Then picture:* Backs of Young Gentlemen, on tip-toes, peering into pawnshop window.

*Legend again:* HIS AUTOGRAPH POEM SCORNE.

*Again picture:* One Young Gentleman throws up his hands; face exhibits signs of anguish. Rushes into arms of Picture-Bosphorus, who consoles him. They talk.)

*At the piano Mr. B. vamps:* "Pack up your troubles."

B. (singing):

Poets who cannot sell their manuscripts

Must Hope! Hope! Hope!

Poisons are costly and to hang yourself

Needs rope! Expensive rope!

Summer flow'rs are coming and for rhyme they give much scope!

So! If there's no money in sham Tennyson

Try Pope! Pope! Pope!

P. BULFIN: That isn't Poetry. That's modern. . . . Here!  
What's wrong with me? I'm changing!

B.: You are changed!  
You have become a Critic!

P. BULFIN: Help! Oh! help!  
How can I be a Critic? I can't write!

B.: No Critics can!

P. BULFIN: I cannot even read!

B.: You'll do quite well when I have split you up  
For the performance of your several functions.

P. BULFIN: Help!

(*The screen:* Picture exhibits inside of pawnbroker's shop. Young Gentlemen, their noses glued to window, form background to Gentleman behind the counter. With him Widow pleads, her lips moving. Gentleman, pointing to poems on counter, makes gestures reminiscent of O. Cromwell saying:

"Take away that bauble!" Widow continues to plead. Gentleman takes up one scroll, unfolds and reads. Violent emotions of Young Gentlemen.

*The screen* (gone black) exhibits poem as read by Gentleman.

*Let Bulfin tremble ! Soon the Muse opprest  
By's ninefold pen, shall bid his humours rest.  
Before her, Criticaster, Pluralist,  
Sink in the dust unhonoured and unkist !  
While Nature's poets, digging workhouse gardens  
Shall go in satin : opulent : Churchwardens !)*

P. BULFIN : What have I done *to him* ? My name is Bulfin !

Yet something's changed in me. I split ! I split !

(*The screen* : Picture re-exhibits interior of pawnshop. Gentleman behind counter shows signs of violent and disagreeable emotions, as if on Channel Passage. Widow weeps into pocket-handkerchief. Young Gentlemen, behind, falling away from window as if fainting.

*Legend* : I CANNOT GIVE A CENT FOR SPRING POETS AND IMITATION DUNCLADS. HAVE YOU NO BOSPHORUS ?

Close-up shows Picture-Bosphorus in street, surrounded by nine Young Gentlemen, weeping, as in Rugger scrum. Bosphorus patting on back as many as he can reach.)

P. BULFIN : I do protest : I will not be myself

Split into nine.

B. : Nine critics here are needed

For five and forty journals.

P. BULFIN : By what right

Do you impose on me this shameful work ?

B. : By right of the Poet. You exist by me,  
From me take shape, even as Achilles, shape  
From a blind beggar. . . .

There is no man doth walk upon this earth  
 But lives and dies by the poet ; sees the grass  
 As the poet lets him see it ; so hears birds,  
 Wind in the trees ; the frost drip in the sun-rise  
 And the whisperings of love. We do command  
 In the very heart of circumstance and glory ;  
 We direct

Renown ; decree to heroes marble bodies ;  
 To others crapulous and frightful shades.

P. BULFIN : I must go down then in this loathly guise  
 Athwart Posterity. Even I ?

B. : You must !

P. BULFIN : I must appear a venial parasite ;  
 Sneak-thief of laurels, carneyer  
 To the be-periwigged and ruffled prosperous ;  
 Pimp to the general unthinking herd.

B. : All this you must and shall !

P. BULFIN : Ah ! wherefore not  
 Write me down murderer !

B. : That too I must !

P. BULFIN : You are inexorable and I surrender !  
 Yet, ah unhappy fate ! For threescore years  
 I ploughed this earth, could neither read nor write ;  
 But drew straight furrows, slept beside my wife,  
 Brought up eleven children, clothed them, fed  
 And taught them how to pray ; nor ever once  
 Stole oats of my master's plough-team : to appear  
 After an honourable, a blameless life,  
 Even as Caligula !

B. : More foul than he !  
 In aspect worse than Judas' you shall go  
 Down thro' the whispering halls of the To Be !

(The screen exhibits legend : USURER RELENTS.

*The screen exhibits picture : Interior of Pawnbroker's shop.*

Gentleman behind the counter, head dependent on chest, arms folded, in attitude of Napoleonic farewell to Josephine. Before him weeps Widow, her face covered. Suddenly Gentleman reaches under counter, draws out and with right hand elevates in air a four-foot string of sausages ; with left hand touches Widow on shoulder. Widow starts back ; waves of emotion depicted on face.

*Close-up shows waves of emotion on Widow's face.)*

*In fore-stage, in light from the screen, can be seen backs of nine Mr. Bulfins, Bosphorus attendant on them in uniform of District Messenger ; they sit like members of a cinematograph audience, in a row on workhouse bench. Messenger hands to each in turn pieces of paper in which shag-tobacco was lately rolled. As each writes, manuscripts, handwritings all being identical, reproduce themselves upon dark screen :*

1st Critique :

Rotten Films Limited surpass themselves  
 (See their advertisement on our page three.)  
 Wit, humour, pathos, fun and pure amusement,  
 Pursue themselves throughout their new production.  
 One word to the Management : The Mister Bosphorus  
 Who writes the so-called verse between the pictures  
 Is hopelessly discredited ; lines that will not scan ;  
 Rhymes that are *no* rhymes ; dull, pedestrian  
 Monotonous blank verse, should not disfigure  
 Again the products of our Rotten Films.  
 England has other poets . . .

## 2nd Critique :

Messrs. the Rotten Films of Bloomsbury  
 (Their announcement occupies our second page.)  
 Provide three sparkling hours of humour, wit,  
 Fun, and amusement in their new production.  
 One word to their Directors ! Has not England  
 Far other poets than some Mr. Bosphorus—  
 To us a name unknown and far less honoured !  
 Whose dull, pedestrian, ten-syllabled  
 And elephantine sonnet forms . . .

## 3rd Critique :

Dullness, pedestrian, and elephantine . . .  
 We little thought one day to write these words  
 Of a production by the Rotten Films.  
 (We note their customary double column  
 On our page six has *not* come in this week.)  
 Let their Management take thought : Is not our  
 England  
 A nest of singing birds . . .

Critiques continue to appear on film until forty-five have been written.

(*After that on screen* : Picture shows exterior of pawnbroker's, undertaker's, and public-house. Eminently Respectable Widow appears in door of pawnbroker's. She calls to Young Gentlemen and elevates string of sausages. Young Gentlemen start. They exhibit every emotion of tumultuous and irrepressible joy ; wave their Trilby hats on high ; slap each other on back ; go through motions of rapturous eating ; finally and visibly give three cheers in unison.

Widow darts with improbable velocity from pawnshop door towards public-house entry ; as she passes immobile Policeman, string of sausages darts from basket and, twining round his knees, unites him to lamp-post. Policeman remains

motionless. Regardless of texture and specific gravity of sausages, Widow disengages these from him, crams them into basket, and disappears through double doors of public-house.

Public-house front approaches sufficiently near and for sufficiently long to allow beholder to appreciate large placard in window, exhibiting portrait of large cat ; beneath it the words : *Unsweetened : 3d. the Double Tot*, the *3d.* erased and, in minute handwriting " 1/- " substituted. Public house recedes.

The Nine Young Gentlemen making a simultaneous dash for public-house door, remain there wedged, but tumultuous. Approach with improbable majesty of Policeman. He waves a white glove.

*Legend :* MOVE ON THERE! YOU ARE NOT IN FIT STATE FOR LICENSED PREMISES! I HAVE BEEN WATCHING YOU!

The Young Gentlemen visibly protest, but run away. Picture-Bosphorus walks slowly towards undertaker's and regards wares. Undertaker comes out and displays coffin-lids.

*Legend :* MOVE ON THERE. YOU KNOW PAUPERS IN UNIFORM ARE NOT ALLOWED TO OBSTRUCT PUBLIC STREET!

THIS GENTLEMAN IS A POET.

MOVE ON THERE! I AM NOT HERE TO ARGUE!

Policeman approaches Picture-Bosphorus, extending white glove. Undertaker visibly addresses him. White glove, immovable, continues to point towards futurity.

Picture vanishes.

*Legend* : (in pink between rosettes) :

INTE  
RVAL  
PART TWO  
in  
TEN  
MIN  
UTE  
S



## ACT TWO

### SCENE II

#### *THE CLASSIC MODES*

Screen appears as house wall. To R. an arbour, labelled :  
*Master and Officials only. Inmates Not Admitted ! Beware of Dog !*  
*On fore-stage NINE BULFINS as Male Chorus ; BOSPHORUS*

*(Chorus, Male)*

I cannot bear it ! Cannot bear it !

BOSPHORUS : Worms !

The Gods to each allot their various forms !

*(Semi-chorus, Male)*

But why these weeds : these half-soiled shirt-fronts :  
 hats

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

Cylindrical in form ?



*(Chorus, Male)*

You Athis are ! We recognise ! Speak on !

*(1st Female Semi-chorus)*

How great our loss !

*(2nd Female Semi-chorus)*

Oh, what a loss for us !

*(Female Chorus)*

Speak, stalwart Stranger ! Where is Bosphorus ?

*(Chorus, Male)*

Look where he stands ; his gown above his head !

*(Chorus, Female)*

But if he stands ! Then he can not be dead !

*(Both Choroi, Strophe)*

See ! He unveils ! Observe ! See ! Mark him !

How

The thund'rous clouds sit gathered on his brow !

*(Anti-strophe)*

Observe ! See ! Mark him ! Shudder ! He unveils !

Hear how his breath comes in tempestuous gales !

*(Chorus, Female)*

Protect me ! Hide me ! From his awful malice

Let's enter here to 'scape !

*(Chorus, Male)*

Athene's Palace

You cannot enter. Here sleeps Cerberus !

*(Chorus, Female)*

Intolerable doom here waiteth us !

*(Chorus, Male)*

We may not shield ; we dare not sympathise ;

The intolerable doom's writ in the skies !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Female)*

We offerings bring !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Female)*

Aye : smoke doomed sacrifice !

BOSPHORUS : What once-loved form is this ?

ATHIS : I Athis am,  
 Glaucis I am, and little Clio's dam ;  
 Campaspe I and Cytherea too,  
 I, Clytemnestra, once beloved by you !  
 And Helen, I whom once you hymned so well,  
 Eurydice for whom you went to hell  
 I am. In me you see as well  
 The dove-eyed Hesper whom you used to tell  
 Of far, foam-fretted islands.

BOSPHORUS : I did love  
 Thee, Athis, once, long since in ages past !

ATHIS : I whom you set above  
 All other women find thee here at last !

BOSPHORUS : But say ! Why seek ye this secluded spot !

ATHIS : In the market-place we sought but found thee not !

BOSPHORUS : What gifts now bring ye in your outstretched hands ?

ATHIS : Sweet soothing herbs gathered in Indian lands !

BOSPHORUS : I do not take your gifts. Here ! Worm-crowd, here !  
 Take ye these cylinders and make your cheer !  
 And as to them ye set the Promethean fire,  
 Fill your starved lungs, your fervent thanks suspire !

*(Chorus of Males)*

The Gods to each ascribe their various fates :  
 Some entering in ; some baffled at the gates !

*(1st Semi-chorus of Males)*

But much bethank'd bard, disclose ! Explain !  
 Why meets this weeping damsel such disdain ?

*(2nd Semi-chorus of Males)*

Her deep-born sighs, her heaving breasts, disclose  
Tempestuous grief, intolerable woes !

*(Chorus of Females)*

Our heaving bosoms and our deep-born sighs  
Betray the woe we feel. How stream our eyes !

*(1st Semi-chorus of Females)*

Our faltering accents, outstretched palms betray. . .

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Female)*

More than a modest virgin's wont to say !

*(Chorus, Male)*

Oh, still their weeping ! To their woes give end !  
Apollo smiles on the poetic friend !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

The Gods to each ascribe a differing lot !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

Some rest on snowy bosoms ! Some do not !

BOSPHORUS : At Athis' eyes my flame I first confessed ;  
Her gold-heeled sandals, her Tyrrhenian vest,  
Her marble bosom and her milk-white arms  
Conveyed to me a thousand tender charms ;  
To Athis was my virgin Muse address !

ATHIS : Upon the sea-cliff where the cedars grow  
He lay, and on my bosom's virgin snow  
His locks reclined. He struck the sounding lyre  
Till all the rocks re-echoed with his fire  
And sea-nymphs envied and the moon burned low.

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

In vain for love like that the gods t' importune !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

I never, never had that kind of courting !

*(Chorus, Male)*

The Gods to each ascribe a various fortune.

BOSPHORUS : From Athis' lips my vagrant Muse disporting  
Led me to Glaucis. Then from Glaucis' lips  
I sipped the nectar ; marvelled at her hips ;  
Her wheat-hued hair ; her chiton's snowy hues ;  
And Glaucis had the tribute of my Muse !

GLAUCIS : To my soft side tempestuous came he courting ;  
Called me his bride ; cast down the milk-white fleece  
In the myrtle-shade ; his wooings would not cease  
To the cyther tone till he had loosed my girdle !  
Ah me ! Thrice-happy maid ! Thrice-blessed myrtle.

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

Torture us not, mad thoughts of amorous strife !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

Do you suppose she really is his wife ?

*(Chorus)*

The Gods to each ascribe a differing life !

BOSPHORUS : Tired of the rustic games of nymph and clown,  
The Muse conveyed me to the busy town ;  
That Cupid mark'd ! Sharper than tooth of asp, he  
Aimed his keen dart. I burned ! I burned ! Campaspe  
Swayed then my Muse betwixt her smile and frown !

CAMPASPE : He sang : I had the stature of the Queen  
Of Pluto's realms ; shine of the moon and sheen  
Of Juno's diadem ; wooed to the flute ;  
Lascivious wood-notes used and dissolute,  
Till with his song he bent me to his purpose !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

A city madam ! Modesty is *her* pose !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

On some the Gods sweet oils, on some the spur, pose !

*(Chorus)*

The Gods to each assign a differing purpose !  
Have mercy, Bosphorus. Be merciful !  
No man can rest and hear your loves to the full !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

Their rounded limbs and thy resounding lyre—  
Gods, make us chaste !—have set us all on fire !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

Inflammatory tones ! Alluring bosom !  
Friends, hold me back ! My morals ! I shall lose 'em !

BOSPHORUS : Worm ! Beast ! Toad ! Tortoise ! Loathly slug !  
Fat midge !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Female)*

You cannot love us all ! Dear Bard ! Abridge !

BOSPHORUS : Not love you all. You mean to say I age !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Female)*

I told you so ! You've put him in a rage !

BOSPHORUS : I cannot love you all ! Jove make me mild !  
Not love ! I swear I'll get each one with child  
'Twixt now and midnight !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Female)*

There you are ! He'll do it !

*(Chorus)*

Why did you bring us here ? We said we'd rue it !

BOSPHORUS : Not love ! The Heavens shall blush at my embraces !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Female)*

My new white peplum !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Female)*

My best Tyrian laces !

*(Chorus, Female)*

He ruins them. . . . Those men have hid their faces !  
 Poor wretched worms ! Have we such meagre arms ?  
 What is the matter with our various charms ?

*(Chorus, Male)*

My dear companions ! Veil each shuddering head !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

This is the Minotaur ! Alive ! Not Dead !

*(2nd Semi-Chorus, Male)*

To some the stones ; to some the yielding bed  
 The Gods ascribe !

*(Chorus, Male)*

Whose is the heavy tread.

That hastening shakes the earth ? 'Tis Hercules !  
 He comes ! The lion's mane doth brush his knees !  
 The vine-leaves in his locks from Omphale's  
 Intoxicating vineyards by the main !  
 Tyrrhenian !

HERCULES :

Ha ! Have I them again !

Girls, where's your shame ? Poet, where is your awe ?  
 I charge ye ! Move from hence ! Respect the law !

BOSPHORUS : Master of Labours ! Here's no purpose evil . . .

ATHIS : Great Labour Master ! He's the very devil !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Male)*

See their tossed locks ! Torn garlands ! And their  
 clothes !

*(2nd Semi-chorus, Male)*

And then his language ! He has sworn such oaths !

*(Chorus, Male)*

The Gods to each . . .

*(Chorus, Female)*

Be silent, Paralytics !

(*Chorus, Male*)

Injurious Females ! We are well-known Critics !

(*Chorus, Female*)

You by your wails have brought this Godhead here  
To interrupt our amours with our dear,  
Our Fav'rite Poet !

(*Chorus, Male*)

Oh ! inconstant ones,

The Gods ascribe to . . .

HERCULES :

That, my decent sons,

Methinks I've heard before. Euripides,

I think it is . . .

(*Chorus, Female*)

Master of Labours.

HERCULES :

Cease !

Three at a time besiege my patient ear !

No more than three at once ! Tell why you're here !

(*Tri-chorus : Athis, Glaucis, and Campaspe*)

Master of Labours ! The great poet here

Did by our eyes and our white bosoms swear

Eternal truth to us !

(*2nd Tri-chorus*)

To us !!

(*3rd Tri-chorus*)

To us !!

HERCULES :

A connoisseur is the great Bosphorus !

(*2nd Tri-chorus : Cytherea, Clytemnestra, Helen*)

Thanks, Master. We next hearkened to his flame,

Till all too soon the Other Woman came !

Unhappy we !

(*1st Tri-chorus*)

And we !

(*3rd Tri-chorus*)

Unhappy we !

HERCULES : Wherefore unhappy ? Three *most* poets use !  
Great poets three times three to inflame their Muse :

(3rd Tri-chorus : *Helen, Eurydice and little Clio's dam*)

That well we know. But, most unhappy we !  
We coming last shared but his poverty !  
Not wine but mead, libation to our flames !  
No fine-horsed chariots to th' Olympic games !

(1st Semi-chorus, *Male*)

You hear their words ! Libations ! Women ! Song !

(2nd Semi-chorus, *Male*)

No poet's purse will run to that for long !

(Chorus)

The Gods to each assign a different moral !

HERCULES : If you continue whispering we shall quarrel !

(1st Semi-chorus)

Hush ! He will head us in a nail-pierced barrel !

(2nd Semi-chorus)

And yet ! This poet's life was most immoral !

(1st and 2nd Tri-chorus, *Female*)

The plainings of those three are truly comical !

When he wooed us he was most economical !

A couch of fleece ; a belt of straw ; some flowers !

Refined ! But inexpensive !

HERCULES : Heavenly Powers !

What would these women ? Poets can in truth

Give you not gold, but sempiternal Youth !

Why after decades do your locks still grow

Golden like wheat-sheaves and your breasts like snow ?

Why shall the charms of Glaucis, Athis, Clio,

Be famed from modern Athens to Ohio

In twice three thousand years ?

*(Chorus, Female)*

We know it well

Great seed of Phœbus ! Future times shall tell,  
Shall picture us. The Topic Films of Pathé's  
Shall figure Clytemnestra, Hesper, Athis,  
Long since in ages past !

HERCULES : Then why complain !  
And wherefore have ye sought this sacred place  
Forbid to women and their idle train ?

*(Chorus, Female)*

Godhead ! No frown upon a woman's face ;  
No plaint on ruby lip doth leave a trace !

HERCULES : Then what's your errand ? Hastily relate  
In words succinct !

BOSPHORUS : This grows monotonous !

*(Chorus, Female)*

In words succincter we will now rehearse !

BOSPHORUS : I really cannot stand this rhyming verse  
Five minutes longer !

*(Chorus, Female)*

Poor, great Bosphorus

Fallen on evil days did leave these climes . . .

BOSPHORUS : No ! no ! I will not go on finding rhymes !

*(Chorus, Female)*

Three minutes longer ! We will be quite terse !

*(Chorus, Male)*

We much prefer his rhymes to his blank verse.

*(Chorus, Female)*

His plays lay unproduced on any stage,  
His lyrics, once the wonder of the age,  
Unquoted and his epics all unsung,  
His name no longer upon every tongue,

His lyre no more the glory of our Times  
 He emigrated into other climes ;  
 Passed from our arms and from our ken went forth :  
 We *heard* he'd sought the frozen barbarous North.

BOSPHORUS : That's put the lid on ! Rhyming no more venture-ye !  
 I am dead sick of all this eighteenth-century  
 Insipid metre !

*(Chorus, Female)*

Bosphorus, our beautiful,  
 No more in the market-place we found thee !  
 Erased thy name from the tablets ;  
 Beside wine-purple seas, forgotten ;  
 The fleece unpressed ;  
 Cyclamens  
 Faded in the autumn all unplucked by thee  
 Lustre on lustre ;  
 Our locks ungarlanded by thee ;  
 Forlorn, lack-lustre !  
 Forgotten the beautiful  
 Singer !

In the market-place sought we the Tyrrhenian laces,  
 No more thy twined words ;  
 The clepsyhydra measured out the hours  
 To the drip of its waters, never to the plucking  
 Of the ivory lyre !  
 Forgotten the beautiful  
 Lyric !

On the Acropolis  
 Sang other poets . . .

HERCULES : I am of course acquainted  
 With the historic outlines  
 Of Athenian poetry.

(1st Semi-chorus, Men)

To us most painful  
This short-breathed division :

(2nd Semi-chorus, Men)

How get  
Into short syllables :

(Chorus, Male)

Divinities of Argos  
Devising to each,  
Unnumbered destinies ?

HERCULES : The slow years passing,  
Lustre melting to lustre,  
Take we for granted !  
Ray cast now on your reasons  
For seeking this sacred  
Womanless Wan-waste ;  
Lawless, licentious,  
Gold-seeking, gold-haired,  
Willow-waist wantons !

ATHIS : Sudden from sea-ways  
Sail swart seafarers  
Merchanting manuscripts  
Stripe-aye, and star-dight  
Mounting the market,  
Bellowing : "*Bosphorus !*  
*Bring Bad Mad Bosphorus'*  
*Million-worth Manuscripts !* "

HERCULES : Wherefore this wan-ness ?  
Manuscripts many  
Doubtless in days dead  
Poet did pen ye !  
So from seafarers  
Gold have ye gotten,  
Gold in galoreness !

*(1st Male Semi-chorus)*

Awful ! His autograph  
Vaulting in value !

*(2nd Male Semi-chorus)*

Dreadful ! Disgusting  
Degeneration !

*(Chorus)*

Awfully awkward this  
Alliteration.

**BOSPHORUS :** Right to the dawëning now hastneth ye !  
Th' Aprillé' soote of our young Poesie !

**ATHIS :** Of Athis of Athéns blakkë dolóur  
There may none eynë dry be for pittý !  
Allas ! No writings haddë sche in power !  
Corn-huëd lokkës must y-curlëd be ;  
And butter craveth pergament like snoe,  
Small fischës fried y-drying of ther fat :  
And broidered sleevës that they lie not flat.  
So walken we the meadës like a flower !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Men)*

This newë vers will slé me utterlie.

*(2nd Semi-chorus)*

We may the fashion of it not sostenë.

*(Chorus)*

So biteth it upon the tongë kenë.  
By Hevenë Queen ! Vers was a fairere maid  
With apt alliteration's artful aid !

**BOSPHORUS :** If you can stand this pace, Labour Dispenser,  
I can't much longer. Make them cut through  
Spenser !

HERCULES : Get on ! We're half asleep ! Fair Locks-o'-silk !  
ATHIS : As when nine summers dry with drought do thirst ;  
As when nine lambs mad for rich-creamèd milk ;  
As when nine maidens feel of love the first ;  
As when nine Goddess-Venus of that ilk  
In froward loves are untowardly curst,  
Melting in tears then gan we thus lament :  
" Aforetime did our groaning coffers burst  
With right be-poem-pennèd parchment ! "  
All in a maze we suddenly up-start ;  
Eftsoons we run all pricking on the plain ;  
Through rosy-finger'd Dawn until Night's dart  
The Occident Sun eclipsèd had again.  
HERCULES : Bosphorus sleeps ! On me doth slumber fall !  
Why not ? This verse can break no law at all !

*(1st Semi-chorus, Men)*

Here surely is God-given Poesie !

*(2nd Semi-chorus)*

If it went on for ever, happy we !

ATHIS : The doughty sun again dothe reach his prime ;  
In Heaven the paper moon hath no more lot ;  
All drunk up is the dew ; no pearlèd rime  
Lies on the grasses of this desert spot  
When Athis cries : " I such a Beast do see  
Of Cerberus that whilom was begot ! "  
CERBERUS : I Cerberus am ! . Who loudly calls on me ?  
ATHIS : Return into your arbour. I did not.  
CERBERUS : That some wight callèd me, full true me-seems !  
ATHIS : Back to your kennel, nor deem me afraid !  
Were you but real I should burst in screams ;  
But we're the creatures of our poet's dreams.  
As his dreams fade to nothing we do fade.

See, Hercules becomes a shadow's shade ;  
And silly Chorus turns to a thistle's ball.  
Myself continues whilst the curtains fall  
Slowly on's dreams ! Could we true poets aid !  
CERBERUS : That can we not, Time having us in thrall !  
They dream us for an ever-spinning ball  
To gape at, some being fair, some monstrous made.  
But Time, a-prompting, crieth out : " Now fade ! "  
So on all poets doth Oblivion fall  
I' the end. They too become a shadow's shade,  
And they and we are no more here at all,  
Being stuff of the shadows.

*ACT THE THIRD*

SCENE ONE

THE ROMANTIC DRAMA

OR

THE PROSE AGE



## ACT THE THIRD

### *THE ROMANTIC DRAMA, OR THE PROSE AGE*

TIME : A.D. MCMLX odd.

PLACE : UTOPIA (any Workhouse or Proletariat Hostel).

FORE-STAGE : Afterwards : Any Home of Transpontine Melodrama.

„ „ Any Home of Legitimate Drama.

#### SCENE I

*Scene represents, as before, white-washed wall and arbour with inscriptions. Sunlight.*

BOSPHORUS ; PAUPER BULFIN.

*They sleep, their bodies on form, heads on table. In workhouse uniform.*

BOSPHORUS (*in his sleep*) : "The earlier twentieth century was distinguished rather by prose than verse. This eminently practical era, dominated by the minds of the economists who gave it lustre, turned with contempt from those light fancies, those specious if agreeable fruits of the imagination to which former ages, though with diminishing avidity, had addicted themselves."

PAUPER BULFIN (*awakening*) : Ere, Boss ! Boss ! Bossy ! Wake up !

BOSPHORUS : "'Literature, called of the imagination,' cried the teeming and industrious populations, 'well-suited though it may have been to ages that could afford to season their comestibles with a plentiful flavouring of Gallic salt, befits ill our sterner complexions.'"

PAUPER BULFIN : Old Bossy ! that dorg will never let me get the forks from the arbour. I told you so ! Ere comes the Labour Master.

LABOUR MASTER : 64209 !

PAUPER BULFIN : Master !

LABOUR MASTER : You and 34241 are not digging. Why ?

PAUPER BULFIN : Pore ol 34241, Master, e fell asleep, Master.

LABOUR MASTER : That I can see. Your excuse, 64209 ?

PAUPER BULFIN : I can't get near the spades, Master. In the arbour, Master. Long of your dog, Master. Bossy—34241—Master, e usually fetches the spades.

BOSPHORUS : "The possession of unusual gifts, whether of the intellect, the imagination, or even of physique, subjected those to whom they were attributed to grave suspicion on the part of the authorities. Unfortunate as was the lot of the class known as the Orthodox Intelligentsia, it was as nothing to the fate reserved for the individual suspected of" . . .

LABOUR MASTER : What does he say ?

PAUPER : It's is lecture that's got on is pore mind.

LABOUR MASTER : Good afternoon, Duchess !

DUCHESS : I should esteem it a favour if you would tell me whether you have here an inmate called Bosphorus. A poet !

LABOUR MASTER : You ask of me a difficult question. We have here a great many inmates who were formerly poets. But, by the Regulations, the Officials are forbidden to know the names of inmates in order that no undue favouritism may be shown.

DUCHESS : An admirable regulation !

LABOUR MASTER : If you will permit me to complete the task I have in hand, I will see if the registers of the Institution will furnish the information that your Grace desires. You will perhaps repose in my poor arbour.

DUCHESS : I shall be delighted. Come, Clarissa.

CLARISSA : How lovely is the arbour with its honeysuckle, clematis, and roses ! Madame, does it not suggest to you the delightful lines that the poet wrote in your Visitors' Book ?

DUCHESS : It does indeed. I was about to quote them when you interrupted me. Never interrupt, Clarissa. How do the lines go ?

CLARISSA :           “ Lady Clara of the Roses  
                          Who with ev’ry geste . . . ”

DUCHESS : To be sure :  
                          “ Who with every geste exposes . . . ”

BOSPHORUS : “ Discloses,” damn it ! “ Discloses ! ”

DUCHESS : I should have thought, Master, that your admirable Regulations would have made impossible the interruption of Tennysonian quotations by the disgusting snores of your sleeping inmates.

LABOUR MASTER : Your Grace, we have a clause that covers the matter. I shall soon put myself at your disposal.

DUCHESS : You are most obliging. Clarissa, to the arbour !

LABOUR MASTER (*writing*) : Inmate 34241. Six days in dark cell when not labouring : first three days no ration. Docked of chapel. Forfeits . . .

PAUPER BULFIN : Master, may I speak ? . . . E’s an ol man. Wore out, e is !

LABOUR MASTER : Of course you may speak, 64209. Regulation 22 expressly enjoins on Officials the patient explanation of the humanities and necessities of the penal enactments of this Institution.

DUCHESS : Oh ! oh ! The dog is going to bite me !

LABOUR MASTER : Go and rescue that lady. We will then continue !

PAUPER : I’d ruther not.

LABOUR MASTER : I find nothing in the Regulations which compels you to. We will therefore continue our discussion.

CLARISSA : Oh ! oh ! The dog is going to bite me !

LABOUR MASTER : They should come out of the arbour.

PAUPER : They can’t. The dog won’t let em.

LABOUR MASTER : 34241 whistles.

PAUPER : E’s whistling to is dorg in is sleep.

LABOUR MASTER : Whistling, I think, is forbidden by the Regulation. I have not had occasion to look up the point, for it has never hitherto occurred to any inmate to whistle. Singular ! The dog is approaching 34241.

PAUPER : It was is dog. You bought it wen e was sold up.

DUCHESS : Clarissa ! Come out of the arbour.

CLARISSA : Madame, is it not safer to remain here ? Who are these common men approaching ?

DUCHESS : I do not know. Master, who are these common men approaching ?

LABOUR MASTER : Those, your Grace, are the audience for the lecture.

DUCHESS : A lecture ! An audience ! Education ! How thrilling ! Clarissa, we will attend this !

LABOUR MASTER : 64209, you have to attend this lecture. You represent the Orthodox Intelligentsia, remember. You censor the lecture for the State. Go to the store and draw the appropriate uniform and then return.

DUCHESS : Master, explain, will you, this lecture that my companion and I are determined to hear ?

CLARISSA : What will be its subject ? Why is it to be given ?

DUCHESS : Who will give it ? Is he good-looking ?

LABOUR MASTER : Female Inmates more to the left. Males stay where you are. The correct interval between Male and Female Inmates to be nine yards or in the alternative twenty-seven feet. Approach each other no nearer.

MALE INMATES : Yes, Master.

FEMALE INMATES : No, Master.

LABOUR MASTER : Duchess, I have now leisure to answer your questions.

DUCHESS : It is most obliging of so occupied a gentleman.

LABOUR MASTER : In the first place, ladies, as you know, the State concerns itself much—nay primarily !—with Education.

DUCHESS AND CLARISSA : We know ! We know !

LABOUR MASTER: Therefore three times a week our Inmates receive Education. It takes the form of lectures. The title of to-day's lecture is *The Poetry of the Prose Age*.

DUCHESS: How thrilling!

CLARISSA: How valuable must that not be to your Inmates!

DUCHESS: Is he a handsome man?

LABOUR MASTER: 3424I, there, is the lecturer.

DUCHESS: That man!!

CLARISSA (*aside to Duchess*): That man is Bosphorus!

DUCHESS (*aside to Clarissa*): Nonsense, Clarissa! How should you know *my* Bosphorus if I do not?

LABOUR MASTER: This is very disagreeable. By Regulation I may not know Bosphorus till I have searched the Registers. Bosphorus might be here, he might be there. Bosphorus, I say . . .

3424I: Yes!

LABOUR MASTER: 3424I! Be silent! Go on sleeping!

3424I: I have not been sleeping. I have been preparing my lecture. It is impossible to prepare a rational lecture whilst contemplating the faces of imbeciles. Therefore I have been closing my eyes.

LABOUR MASTER: Inmates! Ho! Bring three armchairs. The ones with crowns on. Place them here behind the lecturer. Seat yourselves here, ladies. Orthodox-Official-Intelligentsia-Censorate, range yourselves also behind the lecturer, but so as not to interrupt the view of these ladies. Male Inmates farther from Female ditto. Good gracious! Are we to imagine? . . . That will do. The lecture can begin.

BOSPHORUS: Ladies and Gentlemen. . . .

OFFICIAL-ORTHODOX-INTELLIGENTSIA-OF-CENSORS (*Bulfin*): We object.

There are no ladies. . . .

No gentlemen. . . .

Comrades is the proper word. . . .

DUCHESS: I won't sit here and be called Comrades by this riffraff.

LABOUR MASTER: Endure it for a short time, your Grace. Remember these are very unintelligent persons.

BOSPHORUS: Comrades in Misfortune . . .

O.O.I.o.C.: We object. This is Utopia,

Treason. . . .

Behead him! . . .

This is Utopia! (*They continue*)

LABOUR MASTER: Now that the lecture is well under way perhaps your Grace would explain why your Grace is anxious to see this pestilent fellow Bosphorus. I assure your Grace that no one can overhear us. They will shout like this for a quarter of an hour.

DUCHESS: That sounds amusing. You see, I used to be the mistress of the poet Bosphorus. Be quiet, Clarissa!

LABOUR MASTER: A matter of taste, of course.

DUCHESS: You forget that I was Lady Clara de Beevil. The de Beevils of Nonesuch *always* patronised the poet. Nonesuch Hall is, I assure you, full of the manuscripts of epics. Too full!

LABOUR MASTER: Aha! The Americans . . .

DUCHESS: Unfortunately they will not look at autographs of the Great Tradition. Do you suppose that, if they would, with the dollar what it is, I would stay another moment in this beastly country?

LABOUR MASTER: Ah! Who would? If I had eleven dollars . . .

DUCHESS: You might have!

LABOUR MASTER: No!

DUCHESS: Yes!

LABOUR MASTER: That immense sum! Beyond the reach of the imagination. . . .

DUCHESS: If you would help me. . . . But I had better explain. I was once, then, the mistress of the poet Bosphorus. The *favourite* mistress of the poet.

CLARISSA : A . . . h . . . em !

DUCHESS : Be quiet, Clarissa. It is absurd of you to make these pretensions to *your* having been his favourite mistress. *That* was mere promiscuity.

CLARISSA : If I could only get him to take his boots off, I'd prove whether or no . . .

DUCHESS : You are talking prosaic nonsense, child. But talk to him of Venice. Ah ! The Canovas ! The Lagoons ! I remember one evening of our fortnight there. . . . We were in a painted barge. Ah ! The moonlight ! The soft breezes ! The island ! The warm sands ! The distant sounds of merriment . . .

CLARISSA : Do you think I was not there ? I can contain myself no longer. Do you not remember the dark poet with the sombrero ?

DUCHESS : I prefer not to remember the sordid. For me the idyll alone !

CLARISSA : For me his love ! I was his Southern Muse.

DUCHESS : You are talking blank verse, Clarissa. That is forbidden. Is that not so, Master ?

LABOUR MASTER : All kinds of verse are forbidden. But what I do not understand, ladies, is why you should indulge these amours with effeminate beings such as poets are. Why not try—ahem !—a man of action ?

CLARISSA : They are so soon forgotten.

DUCHESS : And when they are forgotten their autographs fetch nothing.

LABOUR MASTER : Aha ! I begin understand why you seek the ci-devant Bosphorus. But . . . . . You must, Duchess, have an infinite number of pages in the handwriting of this fellow.

DUCHESS : Alas, no ! After this fellow, as you properly style him, abandoned Nonesuch . . .

LABOUR MASTER : Never !

DUCHESS : I assure you ! He left the pergolas, the colonnades, the fish-ponds, the stews, the aligned flunkies . . .

LABOUR MASTER : Not to mention your divine self . . .

DUCHESS : Not of course to mention my divine self. That, however, is not unusual ; poets are a fickle race, indiscriminating in their amours. You have read, no doubt, the *Liber Amoris* of Hazlitt. *He* loved a housemaid ! No, it is not unusual, that poets should turn from the great to the apparently inattractive.

CLARISSA : A . . . h . . . em !

DUCHESS : As the dog to his vomit, my dear Clarissa !

CLARISSA : *Touchée, Madame.*

LABOUR MASTER : A distinct score, I think, to your Grace !

DUCHESS : I must tell you that I sell eggs.

LABOUR MASTER : I have indeed heard of the Nonesuch egg.

DUCHESS : Precisely. Well ! Though it is usual in the extreme for poets to turn from their, I might almost use the term, acknowledged spouses. . . .

CLARISSA : As the sated dog from over-accustomed viands . . .

DUCHESS : That would seem to make us fifteen all ! So unusual is it that a poet should abandon the fleshpots of Nonesuch that I may well be excused for imagining this Bosphorus no poet. It becoming necessary therefore to find room, in face of the overwhelming, ever-increasing flood of manuscripts. . . . For I assure you, if Bosphorus was unfaithful, Lady Clara de Beevil—as I then was!—too had not been idle. And there were nine agreeable Young Fellows. . . . In short, acting under the advice of Mr. Bulfin, the eminent critic—surely you have heard of him?—and eggs travelling so much better when wrapped in paper . . .

THE VOICE OF BOSPHORUS (*from back of Stage*) : Unfortunate as was the lot even of the class known as the Orthodox Intelligentsia, it was as nothing . . .

LABOUR MASTER : I thought so. This is what invariably happens. That pestilent fellow has shouted down the orthodox interrupters and has the ear of the meeting. I have again and again warned the Authorities that this is what would happen if they continued to detail Bos . . . 3424I for the lecture.

CLARISSA: I should have thought if there was to be a lecture . . .

LABOUR MASTER: That it should be audible? That is the view of the Authorities. But what happens? Who are the lecturers? All inmates, therefore all discontented and usually intellectually agile. Though I shoot at once every audience that shows counter-Utopian sympathies, this may well cause the downfall of the Utopian State.

DUCHESS: Do you—does anybody—desire anything else?

LABOUR MASTER: Your Grace, I desire nothing else. But whilst the State exists, I, its servant, am its loyal servant. I therefore do my best to have all lecturers—and in particular this 34241—interrupted to the point of inaudibility. When the interrupters, worn out, can no longer continue to mask the lecturer's voice, I announce Half Time. (*He blows whistle.*) Half Time! Half Time there! (*He goes up Stage and mingles with Pauper Audience, who begin talking to him.*)

CLARISSA: Be careful! That man will suspect our identities.

DUCHESS: I should have thought your insolent and absurd pretension . . . (*Her voice is drowned by clamour of Pauper Audience.*)

LABOUR MASTER (*shouting from background*): Be silent, Inmates, or I turn on the machine guns!

(*High-pitched military commands. Rattle of rifle-butts on stones. Silence.*)

DUCHESS (*to Clarissa*): The point is, do you or do you not intend to stick to our bargain?

CLARISSA: You Northern Muses are so tiresome! What do you think I want? Anything else than the society of my darling dear in our garret? Dans un grenier comme on est bien à vingt ans. . . . But you do not know those lines.

DUCHESS: Of course I do! I have the whole of Hugo by heart!

CLARISSA: Then I rehearse our bargain! I am to recognise Bosphorus—to get him to write a poem one hundred words in

length. For each such word U.S. Senateur P. Morgan will pay eleven dollars. The exchange value of the dollar being at the moment in pounds sterling eleven hundred and sixty-three, you will possess the vast sum of thirteen million eighty-five thousand eight hundred and eighty-six pounds—enough, prices being what they are, to purchase this entire country or to live very comfortably in Paris !

DUCHESS : What a head you have for figures, Clarissa ! But are you not intending to play me false. Remember ! I am an old woman. It would be very cruel to betray me.

CLARISSA : Indeed, no ! The gold shall be all yours ! Would I not give it all for my love !

DUCHESS : Still, thirteen million eighty-five thousand six hundred and sixty-three pounds seems a good deal to pay. I have heard of love that went for less !

CLARISSA : You little know such love as mine and Bosphorus's.

DUCHESS : Surely the second "s" should not be sounded ! Or is that pedantic ? . . . There remains, however, the Labour Master to be considered. You must persuade Bosphorus to write one more eleven-dollar word for him ; his is a venial and a sordid soul. Eleven dollars . . . let me see, eleven times eleven hundred and twenty-two . . . twelve thousand three hundred and forty-two pounds is a very comfortable nest-egg for one whose salary is ten-and-six a week.

LABOUR MASTER (*returning*) : Still talking of that fellow, ladies !

DUCHESS : The position is this. The manuscripts of Bosphorus are selling at eleven dollars the word to-day. You, we believe, are in possession of the person of Bosphorus.

LABOUR MASTER : I indubitably am !

DUCHESS : A split indicative ! Almost as disagreeable though not so officially condemned as an infinitive in the same unfortunate condition. But let us not be pedantic ! I then candidly confess that I possess none of the poems of this Bosphorus. This young lady is in the same unfortunate condition.

CLARISSA : I beg your pardon !!

DUCHESS : At any rate you have none of his manuscripts.

CLARISSA : It was never necessary. When, in our Venetian garret, his head resting on my breast, the moon pouring on to the foot of our pallet of straw . . .

LABOUR MASTER : I gather, Miss—excuse my interrupting—I gather then that you, too, actually, possess none of the penmanship of this fellow.

CLARISSA : His poems are engraved on my heart. I could recite ten thousand of his lines.

LABOUR MASTER : I beg that you will not. Verse is forbidden in Utopia !

CLARISSA : Then, to establish the authenticity of my case, I must introduce, with deep regret, a realistic detail. The poet was accustomed to mark his rhythms with his thumb-nail upon my nipples !

DUCHESS : This young person can no doubt relate disgusting details of her amours. But with whom ? My Bosphorus was never such an one. . . .

CLARISSA : Oh ! Oh !! Oh !!!

DUCHESS : The foul fellow with whom she misconducted herself we saw—my Bosphorus and I !!—from our barge side. A lowsel ! with a guitar ! His hat-brim shading his eyes that dared not look us in the face !!

CLARISSA : Oh ! shameless !—shameless ! He was blind ! My poor blind brother !

DUCHESS : Hem ! Hem ! Hem !

CLARISSA : In this frozen land, in this Stone Age, have you then no brothers ! So, that it seems amazing to you that I should cherish the poor afflicted . . .

LABOUR MASTER : Excuse me, ladies. I have a trifling duty to perform. (*Raising his voice.*) Officer, take the Pauper Audience behind that row of haystacks and shoot them. Then return to duty.

OFFICER: C'm'ny! By the left . . .

LABOUR MASTER: That lets me out for five minutes or so.

CLARISSA: And the lecturer?

LABOUR MASTER: He will be shot at dawn. Lecturers are always shot at dawn. I don't know why. Moreover, I have some little employment for him before then.

DUCHESS: Don't nudge me, Clarissa. It is *most* vulgar.

CLARISSA: We have forgotten to tell you, Master, that the only person at whose request Mr. Bosphorus will write anything in the nature of an autograph is myself.

LABOUR MASTER: You offer me eleven dollars to allow you to use your influence with 34 . . . with Mr. Bosphorus. . . .

CLARISSA: And to remove him from this establishment.

LABOUR MASTER: Very well, ladies, I accept your offer.

CLARISSA: I thank Heaven! But it seems too good to be true!

LABOUR MASTER: It is, of course! I have naturally a condition to attach. I intend to try a few little experiments with Mr. Bosphorus before letting our agreement begin. (*Loud explosion off.*) If my—ahem—persuasions are unable to extort some lines of poetry from him . . .

CLARISSA: You are trying to frighten us.

LABOUR MASTER: I naturally am.

DUCHESS: He has used another split indicative. I wish he would not.

CLARISSA: You may observe from the deportment of her Grace how little your threats affect us.

*The footsteps of returning troops are heard from background: Voice of Officer raised in command.*

LABOUR MASTER: You will excuse me, Ladies, I have some orders to give.

*He goes to back of Stage.*

VOICE OF LABOUR MASTER (*from background*): Orthodox-Intelligentsia-Censors, seize and bind lecturer. Make him kneel!

Officer in Charge of Troops, detail your firing party. Damn you, Bulfin, don't damage the man's right hand.

VOICE OF OFFICER: Krumph! Hump! Bumblepup! . . . Shump!

DUCHESS: They appear to be going to shoot the lecturer.

CLARISSA: I don't believe they are. But it's dreadful.

VOICE OF LABOUR MASTER: Inmate 3424I . . . (*his voice dies away in whispers*).

VOICE OF 3424I: I'm damned if I will . . .

VOICE OF LABOUR MASTER (*continues whispering*).

CLARISSA: Oh! I can't stand it. I believe it's just bluff! But the risk!

VOICE OF 3424I: Not a line! Not a word! You are trying to make me commit an illegal action in order to have an excuse for murdering me.

CLARISSA: It's Bosphorus! Don't you recognise the voice?

DUCHESS: Nonsense, child! You have Bosphorus on the brain.

LABOUR MASTER: Here is a signed warrant authorising the writing of one hundred words in verse.

VOICE OF 3424I: Damn you! No! It's against the law. Do you suppose that whilst I enjoy the hospitality of your obscene State I will break its laws? I will not.

VOICE OF LABOUR MASTER: Your blood be on your own head! . . . Officer! order your men to load their guns.

VOICE OF OFFICER: Slipe hope. . . . At twenty diameters! . . . Crump . . . pop . . . !

LABOUR MASTER (*returning to ladies, his face pale, his black eyebrows pointing upwards*): Excuse me, ladies, a disagreeable duty!! (*In sibilant whisper to Clarissa*) Won't you try your hand with him?

CLARISSA (*proudly*): I will not! (*Aside*) Give me strength, Gods!

LABOUR MASTER (*to her as before*): You know who he is?

CLARISSA : I long have !

LABOUR MASTER : And that I have only to give the command " SOLDIERS ! SHOOT ! " and all that is mortal of Bosphorus will be launched into Eternity ?

CLARISSA : You forget that I am a soldier's daughter.

LABOUR MASTER (*as before*) : You mean that, inured to the thought of death, the idea of the dissolution of this Bosphorus will be less terrible to you ? But you are mistaken.

CLARISSA (*to Labour Master*) : I mean nothing of the sort. Do your worst.

LABOUR MASTER : S . . . o . . . o . . . l . . . j . . . ers . . .

CLARISSA : My good man ! When I said that I was a soldier's daughter, I did not mean that I was callous. I am not. Frankly, had I thought that there was the slightest danger to Bosphorus I should have given in. But, being a soldier's daughter, I had observed that your officer, whom I had before noticed as having a pretty good word of command, has just lately been making noises like the words of a stage cannibal ; and there was no sound to indicate that his men were moving. Moreover, eleven dollars is a large sum to lose !

LABOUR MASTER : I seem to be foiled ! (*Calling*) The lecture will continue !

CLARISSA : You *are* foiled. . . . Officer ! march your men off. As they have had an unusually tiring afternoon, give them some little treat—a stroll in the park : I like to encourage the gallant fellows to whom we owe so much.

LABOUR MASTER : You anticipate my commands in the most exact manner. You should have been a man ! . . . Ah ! She has fainted. The strain has been too much. She is a true woman after all. And now, Duchess, your friend being temporarily absent from this vale of tears, to business.

DUCHESS : I am yours to command.

LABOUR MASTER : You will hardly expect me to believe you mean that young woman to escape with her share of the booty.

DUCHESS: You anticipate my intentions, but I hardly think you do justice to my motives. This Young Person is a Southerner. She professes great disinterest; but what is the worth of the professions of these degenerate races?

LABOUR MASTER: Why not enlist my help?

DUCHESS: How gladly I will! Two heads are invariably better than none! I do not claim the credit of that last sentiment. My dear Mr. Bulfin, the eminent critic—you have probably heard of him!—is their author. We must be sudden, resolute, and secret. The merest whisper of our intention to that fainting Creature there . . .

*(Clarissa opens her eyes; she is reclining on bank to rear.)*

. . . The merest whisper, and the suspicions of that desperada are aroused! Then . . .

LABOUR MASTER: Then . . .

DUCHESS: You must remember that she, and she alone, has the power to make Bosphorus write. She must! She shall! *Then*, if we could have our revenge!

*(Clarissa exhibits symptoms of lively interest.)*

But we must dissemble.

LABOUR MASTER: We must think of some deep-laid scheme. Subtle, deep, indecipherable. I have it. . . . But excuse me, there seems to be something going wrong with the lecture. . . . Of course that pestilent fellow has talked those paper-lunged Intelligentsia down again. He always does. But this appears to be more serious. Listen!

THE VOICE OF 3424I: No, you cannot kill poetry. You gentlemen are mistaken in thinking that the essence of poetry is rhyme, metre, apt expression, image.

ORTHODOX INTELLIGENTSIA: Oh! oh! oh!!

LABOUR MASTER: That appears to be madness. Does that not appear to you to be madness, Duchess?

VOICE OF 3424I: Poetry is immortal because it is the endless

chain of the linked expressions of the soul of man. This being a prose age, poetry has taken refuge in prose. The poem that we are living to-day, here and now . . .

INTELLIGENTSIA : Oh ! oh ! How can poetry be prose ? How can we be part of a poem ?

LABOUR MASTER : Mad ! mad ! How mighty a mind is here o'erthrown.

VOICE OF 3424I : You, of course, are ugly, sordid, little, arriviste ! But not more ugly, sordid, little, and arriviste than the men who listened to Euripides !

INTELLIGENTSIA : Athens ! Running down Athens now ! Blasphemy ! The Eljin marbles ! The Medishi Venus ! The enclitic de ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !!

VOICE OF 3424I : Ugly, sordid, little, of imbecile and discreditable ambitions and aims ! Who amongst you has a thought he would not blush to own ! But yet, humanity ! And the distillation of you—as the distillation from a mash of crushed grapes is wine—the distillation of you is poetry.

INTELLIGENTSIA : U . . . u . . . uuuu ! He's going to give us free verse ! Free verse ! Free love ! . . . Free beer ! Blasphemy ! Death !

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS : The punishment of all poets is death ! So I will continue. When I have finished, brothers, you may put me to death. But I shall have finished—do not be alarmed !—long before dawn !

LABOUR MASTER : That man is plainly mad ! His words are without sense or sequence. Seize him ! Gently ! gently ! Don't damage his hands ! To the arbour ! Take him to the arbour ! Don't fall over the dog !

CLARISSA : I should suggest that you remove his boots ! The first thing they do to a drunk in the Clink is to remove his boots.

LABOUR MASTER : Certainly, madam ! Intelligentsia ! remove that man's boots ! Perhaps you would try your hand with him, Miss Clarissa. (*To her, whispering*) We rely on you to get the

manuscript from him ! Gently over the bank, miss. That's right. We trust him to you ! . . . Now, Duchess ! She's gone. I can reveal my plan. It has been burning my lips ! SHE MUST GET THE POEM FROM HIM : THEN WE MUST KILL HIM ! WE MUST NOT KILL HIM BEFORE HE HAS WRITTEN THE POEM !!

DUCHESS : God ! What a brain you have !

CLARISSA : Let us conduct him very gently to the arbour. Gentlemen, bring scented soap, white towels, pure water warmed. Mr. 3424I, rest on me.

BOSPHORUS : I am all right !

CLARISSA (*to him, whispering*) : You are supposed to be mad. It will tremendously assist us in our escape if you continue to appear mad.

BOSPHORUS : You. You ! Here !!

CLARISSA : It is I. Lean on me ! Hard !

BOSPHORUS : You have been faithful to me ! In all the long years of our separation !

CLARISSA : As the needle to the pole ; as the stars to their courses ; as the nightingale to its road through the air, re-seeking Granada !

BOSPHORUS : Then indeed I can appear mad. We are going to be happy ? That at last !

CLARISSA : As the bird in the air ; as the ash-leaf in the black bud ; as all innocent things that perform their functions. . . . See ! We are at the bench beside the arbour. The attendants bring material for the washing of your feet. Sink down, exhausted after your labours. Close your eyes in the sun. Your faithful dog ! He is near death ; but he moves his tail in welcome.

BOSPHORUS : I seem to remember . . .

CLARISSA : Beloved, as old as the sun, as immutable as the hills, so is the story of love of dog and woman for the returned wanderer. . . . Now, they remove your shoes : I will wash your tired feet. Listen while I talk. . . .

LABOUR MASTER: That man appears to be dying. He must not die before he has written.

DUCHESS: Oh! oh! oh! The dog! It crawls towards him; its half-closed eyes open. . . . It is Bosphorus' dog. The watchdog we had. Then that is Bosphorus!

LABOUR MASTER: Truly, 34241 is the poet Bosphorus. His death-certificate will authenticate that for you, my Poverina!

DUCHESS: It would be better to call me Penelope. . . . And that Circe! See! Holding his foot she looks round at me in the sunshine! The scar! The great scar from the ankle to the knee! Let me kill them both! With these two hands!

LABOUR MASTER: You shall not! I am the stronger! I hold you back with knotted muscles. Remember, he has a task to perform before he dies.

DUCHESS: I submit! But if you knew how my entrails burn within me! There is no tide that shall quench them. For that woman truly has enjoyed the favours of my man!

LABOUR MASTER: But revenge in the deep night when only the cricket wakes by the dying fire. . . . And the death in the dawn! That is very sweet in the anticipation.

DUCHESS: Let me not wait, then, long. Gods, not long! Do you perceive! His cheeks are no longer sunken; his eyes, casting off their veils, glow; his shoulders erect themselves! He is a man! The strange woman has washed his feet in the waters of youth; with her hair she wipes them and he laughs!

LABOUR MASTER: It is a very terrible laugh! He springs to his feet! They go into the harbour! He writes, she leaning upon his shoulder. . . . A moment's patience. . . . See! See!

DUCHESS: I can see nothing! My eyes are filled with blood! Perhaps it is blindness! I had as well be blind as not. What are they doing?

LABOUR MASTER: Hist! You! Intelligentsia! Slaves! Surround the entrance to that harbour! If that man escapes, I will have you put to the torture!

DUCHESS : What are they doing ? If he is in her arms I shall go mad ! Blind, I will find my way till I wet my nails in the blood of her throat !

LABOUR MASTER : They are reading now what he has written. They laugh. . . . Hist, you slaves ! Go closer ! The spaces between you are too great !

INTELLIGENTSIA : We dare not, Master ! Look ! The immense hound ! It licked the man's feet whilst the woman washed them. Now ! perceive the immense eyes. Bloodshot ; and the immense jowl that seems to drip blood. It stretches itself before the entrance to the harbour.

LABOUR MASTER : You die, if that man escapes.

INTELLIGENTSIA : Master, we can but die.

DUCHESS : What are they doing ? You do not tell me what they are doing. Every gesture I wish to hear of, every thought of their faces.

LABOUR MASTER : Their faces are filled with joy. They are standing up. . . . They throw a paper out of the harbour into the grass. I will fetch it.

DUCHESS : It is terrible to see nothing and to hear the growling of that immense hound.

LABOUR MASTER : The hound threatened me terribly, but they restrained him and I have the poem. I will read it to you.

DUCHESS : What does it matter ? Yes, read it. It is all one if you will not tell me how they are employed. They are in each other's arms !

LABOUR MASTER : No, no ! They stand looking at us. They are quite still. Now ! This is the poem !

“ Since you'll exist but by a certain will,  
A feeble folly 'tis to cross it ; ill  
The Gods requite the crosser. There's no age  
Nor man nor God can stand against that rage !

Though you be kingly you'll be limn'd so curst ;  
Though glorious, be written down the worst  
Pied, pigmy pismire of a rotten fen ;  
Bear you huge shocks and shock 'em back again ;  
Be braver you than Agamemnon's men  
You go down Time a puling, knockneed craven ;  
Spawned like the toad ; hell-voiced like the raven ;  
And your fair paramour a drab i' the rain ;  
This crabbed hundred words peruse again ! "

What shall that signify ? I count the words. Truly there are a hundred.

DUCHESS : Alas ! alas ! I would they had never been written !

LABOUR MASTER : I do not see why. To me they seem to have no significance !

DUCHESS : Tell me ! What are they doing now ?

LABOUR MASTER : I do not see them. They are not in the harbour. Slaves ! Dreadful shall be your tortures this night !

DUCHESS : No, no ! Here is ado enough. You have surely a little postern door in your harbour that you should not have. . . . In God's name, let it be.

LABOUR MASTER : We will follow them—with posse, alarms, torches.

DUCHESS : Aye, we will follow them ! What profit is in that ?

LABOUR MASTER : Your voice is very faint.

DUCHESS : I beg you, read me that poem again !

LABOUR MASTER : I will. . . . What is this ? On this side ? No ! On this side still none. There is no poem here !

DUCHESS : I thank God !!

LABOUR MASTER : What ! That we lose an infinite mountain of gold ?

DUCHESS : No ! Because it no longer stands in the poet's hand that I am a drab in the rain.

LABOUR MASTER : What, you would give a mountain of gold that that should not be written of you ?

DUCHESS : Aye ! And that would you not, so you think. But be you dead a hundred years and people reading those words of you and that your only repute in the world . . . and what would you then do ? You would give such a mountain of gold as should reach from the cellar of hell to the peak of heaven that you might come back to earth and erase those little words.

LABOUR MASTER : I did not know the dead had such uneasinesses.

DUCHESS : The dead have many uneasinesses that you know not of. But come ! Get together your horsemen. We will pursue those fugitives, and I think we shall yet take them and slay them.

INTELLIGENTSIA : Marvellous are the infinite varieties that the Fates have at command ; some fleeing, some in pursuit ; some in fleeing triumphant ; some weeping that do follow ; some tyrants that do oppress the gyrating earth ; some oppressed recorders that do send down the names of tyrants to stink in successive nostrils. But for me I would rather sit in the sun and shell peas, though I think I shall never do it. Come, let us take in these forms and benches and drink our tea, for I think we must be with the pursuers concealing our true wishes that lie with the pursued ; and it is well to have a good bellyful of hot tea on the wintry roads. I would rather it were steaming wine ; but that we must not say. I would rather still lie with a warm wench ; but that too we must not say. It is only fools, desperadoes, outlaws and poets that say such things, feel them how you may. Truly, infinite are the varieties of affliction that the Fates have arrayed for men. Let us then be circumspect, not over-loquacious, facing both ways, and industrious. So we may scrape through unnoticed and rest at last under applauding tombstones in the Poet's Corner of some Pantheon whilst poets rot in unconsecrated earth.



*ACT THE FOURTH*  
SIC ITUR  
LEADING TO  
HARLEQUINADE,  
TRANSFORMATION SCENE,  
AND CODA





## ACT THE FOURTH

### SIC ITUR

#### LEADING TO

### HARLEQUINADE, TRANSFORMATION SCENE, AND CODA

**TIME :** A.D. MCMLX odd, as in preceding Act.

Afterwards : Eternity.

**SCENE :** The road to Elysium.

Afterwards : Outside any Putney-Siena bedroom window.

„ A street in Clerkenwell.

„ Interior of Westminster Abbey with Poet's  
Corner.

„ Elysium, near Parnassus.

*Scene represents a road, perhaps over a moor ; at any rate hedgeless.*

*Rain mixed with hail, obscures everything but a wet, greyish-white  
ribbon that disappears at a great distance.*

#### SCENE I

#### BOSPHORUS ; THE SOUTHERN MUSE

**BOSPHORUS :** *Wears a bedraggled, white-satin costume as of a  
Watteau Shepherd ; wet ribbons flapping, hard and lifeless at  
his knee.*

THE SOUTHERN MUSE : *Very décolletée, with V-shapes back and front. Her mandoline is slung behind her, the wet pink ribbons making channels in the Greuze-like flesh of her shoulders and breast. Her hair blows sideways in the water-laden gales.*

BOSPHORUS :                      What roses !  
                                          Surely such roses never  
                                          Scented the happy airs !

SOUTHERN MUSE :    What nightingales in the sun !  
                                  Did such mad love-notes ever  
                                  By day call from the stairs  
                                  Of the hanging-garden closes  
                                  In Babylon ?

B. :                                      The crickets :  
                                          How they sing in the warm thickets !

S. M. :                                The sun-warm lavender !

B. :                                      Surely no lavender ever  
                                          Had the perfume of thy breath !

S. M. :                                The little crickets, deafening the ear,  
                                  Assemblies in the shadow of the heath,  
                                  Parliaments in the dry roots of the fig ;  
                                  Courts of Love on the topmost dizzy twig  
                                  Of rosemary ; and trystings in the foliage of  
                                  the bay !

BOSPHORUS :                      *La cigale ayant aimé tout l'été !*

S. M. :                                The little crickets never, never rest.  
                                  All summer through we shimmer and churn  
                                  and chirp ;  
                                  Like poor, love-tortured bosoms never blest  
                                  We know no rest.

B. :                                      Belovéd, I explore  
                                  The tepid shadows of thy odorous breast  
                                  With honey-seeking lips ; my fingers twine  
                                  In the interstices of thine ; I mine

S. M. :

Thy being with my being ; and thy lore  
Learn of thy heart's sweet core !  
Lord of my flesh and its lore !  
Thy brazier, thy oil, and thy urn  
Swept, garnished am I that do lie  
Open, my wave to thy sky ;  
Awaiting ; warm sea-way thy ship ;  
Consenting, my rim to thy lip !

SCENE II

The same: to them YOUNG ARLEQUIN

YOUNG ARLEQUIN: *Wears a black, skull-tight satin cap; black visor; tight patch-work clothes. He carries a feather-sword and has in his belt a wooden dagger.*

YOUNG ARLEQUIN: Sister, where you see the white road dip,  
Hasten pursuers!

**SOUTHERN MUSE :**                      Blind, bespangled brother !  
Who is this sleeps on my heart but my love  
and none other ?

Y. A.: Is then no duty to do for the son of our mother?

S. M. :            Draw the deep curtains apart ; who is this  
                       sleeps on my heart  
                       But my love and the lord of my dawn ?

Y. A. :           What's then the task for the true, blind-trusting brother at dawn?

Love bideth not till 'tis noon !

S. M. : Ah ! is this true? Is it dawn?

**It comes too soon !**

Y. A. :           Night-long I watched, by the yew, shadowed,  
                          and sharpened my knife.

S. M. :                Here of my flesh is the lord, sleeping ; the  
                                 heart of my life !

- Y. A. : Night-long I asked of my sword : " Blade, is  
thy steel grey with thirst ? "
- S. M. : He of my nights had the first ; he of my lips  
drank the dew.
- Y. A. : Would this were through and he dead ; stealing  
from you—he were dead !
- S. M. : You call me from my radiant bed  
Into the frost upon the lawn,  
Me who play pillow for his head,  
To hear chill reason in the dawn !  
Me, with my heavy-lidded eyes  
You bid observe the white sun rise !
- Y. A. : Sister ! I do but ask what's best !
- S. M. : You call from interlacēd rest,  
Me with my load of happy sin  
Ask : " What is now the worthiest  
Course to pursue ? " Oh, Arlequin !  
In former days you led our dance  
And sang : " Ah ! leave the rest to  
chance ! "
- Y. A. : Sister ! I did but whisper you : " Black-visaged  
men at arms pursue ! "
- S. M. : And what's my brother for ; what else  
But to protect us in our sleep ?  
Must I go ringing dairy bells  
Or pasturing the silly sheep ?
- Y. A. : That's then the charge to me from you : your  
woman-wisdom old and true !  
A brother must from all pursuers, preserve  
his sister's favoured wooers !
- S. M. : That, that I charge you and naught else ;  
Else I go ringing passing-bells  
For all my life. My love's abed  
And all the world is well with me.

Y. A. :                   There shall no feather light on's head !  
                              Out, out, light knife ; down, down dark visor,  
                              Dazzle and darken all they see  
                              With sun-dogs. Strike the road, white blade !  
                              Rise fog to fog their heavy eyes, or  
                              Man-traps make their feet afraid !

*(ARLEQUIN smites road with flat of his sword ; there arises  
immediately an extremely dense London Particular.)*

Univ. of  
California

TO WHOM  
IT MAY CONCERN



### SCENE III

#### HARLEQUINADE

VOICES alone of BOSPHORUS and SOUTHERN MUSE.

Apparent to AUDIENCE ALONE : ARLEQUIN.

Afterwards : DUCHESS, LABOUR MASTER, PAUPER BULFIN.

*(Dimly illuminant shop-windows show through fog ; motor headlights in extreme confusion ; sounds of horse-hoofs on granite setts ; Ford horns ; whistles ; fog-signals ; ex-servicemen's cornets ; London fog-humour ; the constant exclamation : MOVE ON THERE ; WHERE YER SHUVVIN' ; a lugubrious and ancient barrel-organ plays.*

*Emerging from fog towards footlights : ARLEQUIN. He carries by strap over shoulder a one-legged barrel-organ ; the top covered with antique green baize.)*

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS :

This, this is what they offer us  
To versify.

VOICE OF SOUTHERN MUSE :      My Bosphorus,  
From the dull confines of this drooping North  
Now we go forth.

B. :                                      Aye, we are quit of the North ;  
But the mind looks back.

S. M. :                                      It will for a little while.

B. :                                      I wonder why we toiled in this miasmatic, black,  
Chill-fetid winter of the Northern Day.

With our hands cold  
 And our luck out ;  
 Growing old,  
 Then turn about  
 The other way :  
 The feet cold  
 And the bailiffs in ;  
 A dream of gold  
 Befogged by gin  
 That's deified  
 And called London Pride !

ARLEQUIN (*turns handle of barrel-organ : it wheezes :*

*Up and down the City Road,  
 In and out the Eagle,  
 That's the way the money goes,  
 Pop goes the weasel !*)

SOUTHERN MUSE : Hark ! hark ! the classic hymn of these  
 Northern climes !

There are who hold it dear as we the cricket-  
 rhymes

From our lavender-thicket !

(*Planting barrel-organ into stage by the spike of its leg, ARLEQUIN disengages himself from strap, pirouettes to centre of footlights, draws sword, and strikes the boards.*

*The fog dissolves with a click ; cardboard omnibuses, coster-carts, and donkeys ; ex-service men ; and dilapidated passers-by are seen being drawn up into flies by strings.*

*Scenery : at back : brightly and improbably coloured but very dilapidated house-fronts ; the sets very ill-fitting ; sky-cloths resembling washing hung out to dry. House to r. a gin-palace ; centre, an undertaker's ; to l. pawnbroker's.*

*On fore-stage to extreme right an immense Rolls-Royce, all its metal parts shining with an improbable brightness. In car : NORTHERN MUSE as DUCHESS ; LABOUR MASTER as CHAUFFEUR ; in rear seat PAUPER 64209 as MISTER BULFIN. They shade their eyes as if gazing into great distances from a mountain top ; shake their heads to indicate that the object of pursuit is not visible, and otherwise denote dismay and ill-temper.)*

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS :

But how is it possible that men hold dear,  
 In these lugubrious places,  
 This dreary land ; the clod-like, inglorious  
     races,  
 The befogged, gin-sodden faces ;  
 The lewd, grim prudery ; for-ever-protracted  
     chases  
 After conceal'd lechery ; hog-like dull embraces  
 Under a grey-flannel sky ; un-aired and damp  
 Like poems a-stink of the lamp :  
 And the learned bronchitics that vamp  
 Hodden-grey thoughts all to stamp  
 Craving tenpence for fourpence  
 And more pence and more pence  
 And grudging us our pence !

How is it possible that men hold dear  
 Our dreary, dripping valleys,  
 Monotonous misty alleys  
 Whence dully, drearily sallies  
 Song of grey sodden birds ?  
 In the air of frightening keenness,  
 The mists of might-have-been-ness,  
 The ceaseless, ceaseless greenness,  
 The thought as thick as curds !

S. M. :

I knew a beggar once lived in a sewer  
 And when they took him to Colonna's palace,  
 Gave him pomegranate juice in a golden chalice,  
 Warm-washed his feet from out a crystal ewer  
 And called him "Lord," being the new-found  
 Colonna :

He feebly wept and cried to the Madonna  
 To set him back again in his old drain,  
 That being his lair, his roof, his home ; and  
 his pride  
 Being rats as great as swine and the filthy tide !  
 They would not let him back and so he died.

(ARLEQUIN turns handle of barrel-organ. It wheezes :

*Tike me beck, beck, beck to me yome agen,  
 Nile th carpet to th flore !  
 Theyole broke carch jus stend dahn there  
 Jus ware it stood be-fore.  
 N. Nah ! Mister Lanlord, if I owesyer any rent  
 Ile pie yer : don't yer shaht. . . .)*

ARLEQUIN pirouettes up-stage, striking boards with his sword, which, gracefully bending, he allows to remain on ground. The Rolls-Royce hoots and advances until front wheels touch sword. Loud explosion of front tyres. LABOUR MASTER is pitched over front-screen in somersault. Alighting on his feet, he is seen to be POLICEMAN, helmet, white gloves and bull's-eye lantern in belt all complete. He stands before bonnet of car, one gloved hand raised, the other opening note-book.

ARLEQUIN smites upper windows of Pawnbroker's shop. From one there pitches out BOSPHORUS in long white night-garment, his face and hair floured chalk-white. He alights on right shoulder, bounces on to feet, springs his own height in air and comes down again. He then hobbles, so round-shouldered as

*to have aspect of a hunchback, peering through enormous spectacles and muttering : " Ga-ga ! Ga-ga ! ! "*

*From other window SOUTHERN MUSE, in ballet-skirt of white gauze and white satin bodice, trips swiftly down invisible wire, presents BOSPHORUS with crook-handled walking-stick with rubber ferrule ; springs six feet in air executing nine entrechats ; then sinks on one knee, pressing tips of fingers of both hands to her lips.)*

VOICE OF PANTALOO-BOSPHORUS (*his lips do not move*) :

But that is not enough to explain. Look here !

Men may love fog, gin-palaces, barrel-organs,  
Mud, greasy-slipping field-ways ; green-scummed ponds ;

Tempestuous weathers ; stench, colds in the nose ;

Webbed feet ; frogs ; flooded drains and fog-bound sparrows ;

Mutton whose juice turns tallow in the dish :  
All that is very well. You say 'tis the home  
That breeds home-sickness : that is very well !

But if those be our beauties, then why not—  
Yes, why not—hymn the fog ; the din ; the mutton,

Women's arms red to the elbows, dripping noses,

The ceaseless greed for money ? Yes, why not  
Have deathless lyrics to hot-water bottles  
And all the beauties of our homing climes ?

The three gold balls and all : though even those

Are Lombard : from the South !

(*Whilst talking, COLUMBINE-SOUTHERN-MUSE is executing vols-de-pigeon round the whole circumference of the stage, PANTALON-BOSPHORUS hobbling after her, extending walking-stick and mumbling: "Ga-ga! Ga-ga!!"*)

S. M. :

I knew a Pope  
That secretly loved only opera tunes.  
"La! la! La! la! La! la-la!" tunes he  
loved ;  
And garlic-sausage, cabbage and pig's fry :  
Quite innocent enjoyment for a Pope  
In moderation. Yet this gallant Saint  
Who afterwards was duly canonised,  
And very properly—this Saint, then, first  
Unearthed Palestrina from the dust  
Of Vatican centuries—and heard no lighter  
music  
Than that until his death. He for his meats  
Dined off steamed sole : there's nothing else  
more tasteless,  
But gave his guests the elegantest collations  
For the honour of the Church. This saintliness  
I certify was not hypocrisy.  
He craved and practised highness. I knew  
him well,  
Having been his muse when in the sonnet-  
mood.

(*SHE sinks again on one knee in centre of the stage ; then from the knee springs high over the Rolls-Royce and its occupants, her down-pointing feet a mist of entrechats. She returns to earth at the side of ARLEQUIN, who has brought his barrel-organ to the step of the car.*)

PANTALON-BOSPHORUS, hobbling after her, is arrested by  
DUCHESS. Leaning out from Rolls-Royce, she catches him

*by the nape of the neck, lifts him high in air and dumps him into chauffeur's vacated seat.*

ARLEQUIN has put up his visor and has thus become visible to occupants of car ; he has drawn from belt behind his back an enormous black sombrero and is turning the handle of the organ. It wheezes :

*There were four and twenty of us  
'N we all went ome in the keb !*

COLUMBINE-SOUTHERN-MUSE extends hand towards occupants of car. PANTALON-BOSPHORUS feels frantically in folds of night-garment for trousers pocket. He is quelled by DUCHESS, who strikes him on head with parasol handle. COLUMBINE approaches back seat. MR. BULFIN, leaning over rapturously, strokes her chin. DUCHESS turning round towards him, majestically and with intense meaning points at ARLEQUIN and COLUMBINE, indicating by pointing at the third finger of her left hand and shaking her head that the young couple are not truly married. MR. BULFIN throws up his hands in dismay and collapses into bottom of car.)

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS :

*Why waste we time on this buffoonery  
Who doubtless could away ?*

VOICE OF COLUMBINE-SOUTHERN-MUSE :

*It is the cock :*

*It is the cock we owe. I've seen wise Cæsar  
Marcus Aurelius Antoninus when  
Writing his Meditations stop to play  
At pease-in-the-bladder with son Commodus  
In his mad-drunken court. You see the Public  
Expect it of us : we must pay our way  
Into Elysium more than other folk  
Who lack our conscience as our recompense,  
Being the cock we owe to Æsculapius.*

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS :

You must advise me ! These moralities  
Are new to me. Teach me to come off well !  
S. M. : I'll bring you fitly off. Play you your part  
As creditably as you have the art  
For fitness' sake.

P. B. : I'll bear it in my heart !

S. M. : Aye do you that : for these are children here !

P. B. : That is most true ! Children should have  
good cheer !

(ARLEQUIN resumes his visor. He pirouettes to tradesmen's  
doors ; strikes them ; then to car, where with his sword he  
strikes on the head DUCHESS and MR. BULFIN.)

SCENE IV

AFTER-HARLEQUINADE

DUCHESS as NORTHERN MUSE ; MR. BULFIN THE CELEBRATED CRITIC, DOUBTLESS YOU KNOW HIS NAME, AS CLOWN ; other CHARACTERS AS BEFORE ; CROWD, PUBLICAN, PAWN-BROKER, POLICEMAN, etc. . . .

(ARLEQUIN smiles centre of stage. Hind tyres of Rolls-Royce explode. PUBLICAN, UNDERTAKER, and PAWNBROKER appear at doors ; CROWDS of errand-boys and seedy individuals. DUCHESS has a widow's bonnet with crêpe strings ; black, meagre dress, very red nose.

MR. BULFIN THE CELEBRATED CRITIC has chalk-white complexion ; black hair ; scarlet triangles on cheek and chin ; white and scarlet-piped attire ; hands in trousers pockets. He pops, Jack-in-the-box like, up from floor of rear seat of Rolls-Royce and smacks PANTALOOON-BOSPHORUS on cheek.)

PANTALOOON-BOSPHORUS (*with immense gusto*) :

ULLO, JOEY !

CLOWN-CRITIC-BULFIN :

ERE WE ARE AGAIN !

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS :

I did that well ?

VOICE OF SOUTHERN MUSE :

Darling ! Most monstrous well !

VOICE OF BOSPHORUS :

I have not shaken off all Northern shards  
Inscribed " Be not ridiculous ! "

S. M. :

You'll do it ;

For soon now you shall die.

(NORTHERN-MUSE-DUCHESS *descends from car. She bears a square basket upon her arm. A long string of sausages, caught in her skirt, unreels from car door.*

CLOWN-CRITIC-BULFIN, *searching frantically in tool-box at rear of car, extracts red-hot poker. He runs to apply this to seat of POLICEMAN, who is drinking ecstatically from enormous pewter-pot handed him by PUBLICAN. POLICEMAN, humorously entangled with sausages, executes back somersaults to footlights.*)

VOICE OF PANTALOO-BOSPHORUS :

All this buffoonery ! Called innocent  
But founded in misfortunes ! Harsh, dull,  
bitter :

The desolate reflection of a world  
Importunately clamant ; avaricious !  
The genius of a people here revolting  
Against their hodden gods !

C. S. M. :

Of old in Rome

I played the Columbine I'm playing here  
Much as I play it here ; and Arlequin,  
Just as he plays it ; many years ago  
—Why, what a thing it is to be immortal !—  
Two thousand years ago we played like this !  
And, if you think, under those Southern skies  
The Roman people's stage was less debauched,  
Besooted or besotted, imbecile,  
Less stuff to vomit at, though then were  
Cæsars

Imperial in purple, and white gods  
 At every corner of the stony ways  
 In the blazing sunlight.—Why, if you think  
*that*

You know of the Roman *latifondia*,  
 Or Roman brothels, stews, and labour-houses,  
 Less than I think you know. The saying was :  
 “ When Hercules and Jove have had their day  
 The grosser people take their liberal way.”

P. B. : Yet theirs was newer wit !

S. M. : It then was newer !  
 From duck-weed sing no nobler fowl than frogs.  
 And 'twere hypocrisy to seek such there.  
 But there's perhaps a use for frog-spawned  
 ponds  
 In the All-Father's eyes !

(CHAR-LADY-NORTHERN-MUSE *has run to Pawnbroker's shop.*

THE PAWNBROKER *stands in his doorway. She points first to Bosphorus in car, then to rolls of manuscript. Pawnbroker regards BOSPHORUS with unmoved countenance, points finger at manuscripts, makes gestures of shaving and unshakably folds his arms.*

THE NINE YOUNG GENTLEMEN *dance gracefully across stage, making also gestures of shaving and then shaking their heads.*

CHAR-LADY-SOUTHERN-MUSE *poses as if looking in cupboards and finding innumerable manuscripts. The NINE repeat gestures to show that they do not shave. Each seizes a manuscript and, dancing before PANTALOO-BOSPHORUS in chauffeur's seat, display rolls to him. PANTALOO-BOSPHORUS points to manuscripts, then to his own breast-bone, and nods with aged dignity.*

The PAWNBROKER *takes manuscript from basket ; opens it ; points at BOSPHORUS and nods his head in violent emotion.*

CHAR-LADY *and the NINE all do the same.*

PAWNBROKER, *indicating ecstasy, enters shop by door ; emerges headlong through window. He now wears red-white-and-blue-striped trousers ; a blue tail-coat embroidered with white stars ; white high hat, and white goatee. He bears strapped across him a bookmaker's money wallet of enormous proportions. It is lettered P. MORGAN.*

CHAR-LADY, *the NINE, POLICEMAN, PUBLICAN, and CROWD of seedy individuals and errand-boys all kneel.*

*Barrel-organ wheezes :*

*My country 'tis of Thee,  
Sweet Land of Liberty,  
To thee we sing !*

AN IMMENSE OLD GLORY—with six hundred and forty-three stars ! and of perhaps a quarter of an acre in extent—is let down from the flies. AUDIENCE rises and AUDIENCE and PERFORMERS sing in unison the United States National Anthem.)

VOICE OF PANTALOON-BOSPHORUS :

Land of great dollar-bills,  
To buy our homes and hills  
We call thee here !  
Land where our uncles died  
We call to thee : " Provide  
Through our poor countryside  
Free shag and beer ! "

VOICE OF SOUTHERN MUSE :

You are too hard upon your countrymen.  
Money they sell their souls for. But they are  
No whit more venial or treacherous,  
Not much more crassly ignorant or sordid  
Than other mighty, now deceased peoples.



## VOICE OF SOUTHERN MUSE :

As lives do go  
Now comes your hour to die and be with the  
past.

But, being near Jove-Father in the courts  
Of High Olympus many æons ago,  
I saw him drop his pocket-handkerchief.  
And picked it up. "Thank you," said mighty  
Zeus.

"My little handmaid when you are my age  
I'll do as much for you." I being quick  
—Aye, very quick in the up-take, cried to him :  
"All-Father Zeus !"

"Why, call me Jove," quod he.  
"What do you want ?"

"I want a man !" said I.  
"Any man, prettykin ?"

"Zeus-Father, no !  
The gift to choose one man !"

"He, being dead  
To be immortal in your young, warm arms !"  
"Zeus-Father, yes," I answered, fingering  
My petticoat hem.

"Good, god-child, oh !" said he,  
"You know not what you ask. The gardeners  
Are most neglectful. Here is half a peck  
Of wild-vine leaves that should been swept up."  
"All-Father-Zeus," cried I, "you've such a  
beard !"

"You like it, child ?"  
"'Tis most majestic, sire !"  
"I shall speak to Juno."

"Thunder-Caster ! God !  
One little man for immortality,

To lie beside me in warm sandy roads  
Where the cricket chirrup ! "

" Child, you plague me ! "

" God !

Great God of Time ! my chance of happiness  
After my loyal labours."

" Pretty Heart !

What is it that you crave for ? " The Great  
Gods

Are rather vacant, lose themselves, forget  
"Twixt word and word the burden of your  
prayers.

" A man. To be immortal, God ! " I answered.

" What ? That is easy, child," God querulous

Droned on. " If I had better servants

Wild-vine leaves would not fill my corridors.

Choose thou a poet : I will do the rest.

No one does notice poets : those lewd fellows

Have immortalities to outlast us Gods ! "

And I chose you, my dove-wing, my soft  
spouse,

My honey-lip, my poet, mouth of gold,

My waist-encircler, my breast-rifler. You

Who're now about to die !

(ARLEQUIN sets barrel-organ playing :

*We've lived together nah fer forty years,*

*And it inte seemed a die too much.*

*He strikes stage near manuscript basket and Rolls-Royce.*

CLOWN-CRITIC-BULFIN thrusts red-hot poker into basket : it  
vanishes in a huge feather of flame. He rushes to Rolls-Royce  
and inserts poker in crank-shaft. Enormous explosion. PANTA-  
LOON-BOSPHORUS is thrown out on to boards ; CLOWN-CRITIC-  
BULFIN smites him on head with bladder. He dies.

ROLLS-ROYCE *with a solemn vindictiveness executes a pas seul on his prostrate corpse. He is picked up by UNDERTAKER, a perfectly flattened figure, rolled up and placed in ornamental coffin standing outside the shop.*

· BARREL-ORGAN WHEEZES The Dead March in Saul.

ARLEQUIN STRIKES CENTRE OF STAGE.)



UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA



## SCENE V

### TRANSFORMATION SCENE

*(An immense building descends from above, hiding Public-house, Undertaker's, and Pawnbroker's. It is Westminster Abbey.*

UNDERTAKER in costume of Dean of Westminster (1960 odd, of course) precedes cortège to Abbey portals.

NINE YOUNG GENTLEMEN in correct mourning, their nearly white Trilby hats having become a sooty black, pick up BOSPHORUS in coffin and erect him on stage. His night-garment has become a shroud. Striking resemblance to Dr. Donne renders all beholders dumb.

To solemn strains of innumerable regimental bands playing their quick-steps very slowly the coffin of BOSPHORUS is borne into Abbey by the NINE.

It is followed by CHAR-LADY-NORTHERN-MUSE on arm of PAUPER-64209-CLOWN-CRITIC-BULFIN and by CROWD; Publican, Pawnbroker, Seedy Individuals; Errand-boys, Prostitutes from Leicester Square attracted by minute gun-fire; Members of Middle-class attracted by BULFIN paragraphs in Morning, Evening, Sunday and Weekly periodicals.

ARLEQUIN on barrel-organ plays:

*Following the tram-lines homewards;*

*Following the dear old Dad!*

*Jingle of Life-Guard Accoutrements.*

*In first carriage:*

REPRESENTATIVES of the King.

*In second carriage :*

*REPRESENTATIVES of H.M. the Queen Consort.*

*In third carriage :*

*REPRESENTATIVES of H.M. the Queen Dowager.*

*In omnibuses :*

*REPRESENTATIVES of the Rest of the Royal Family ; of the British Cabinet ; the United States ; Sinn Fein, Ulster and other EMBASSIES ; the Chargés d'Affaires of the Soviet, Tsarist and Kemalist Governments ; the Consuls-General of Portugal, Paraguay, Peru, and the French Republic, etc. etc.*

*All these by their yawns conceal their identities.*

*The fore-stage has become pitch dark. In transparency to rear there exhibits itself :*

#### INTERIOR OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY

*Two busts of poets represent Poet's Corner. On the other hand there are visible innumerable white marble statues of Statesmen, Generals (cashiered), Admirals (shot for political reasons), Footmen (useful in their humble way), Prize-fighters (who were profitable in the betting line to royal Dukes) ; in addition cinematograph machines ; broadcasting receivers ; gramophone apparatus and the apparatus of Press photographers. These completely obscure the pulpit.*

*In a stage-box carefully erected by removing several of the pillars of the triforium sits MR. BULFIN, the eminent Critic. With him are nine typewriters ; innumerable errand-boys become printer's devils ; telephone mouthpieces ; telegraph-operating keyboards.*

*THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER (1960 odd, of course) ascends pulpit. The clickings of MR. BULFIN'S machines, which have hitherto drowned all other sounds, succumb in turn to the creakings, buzzings, and irritable crepitations of the other Publicity Paraphernalia. THE DEAN, who has tried in vain to perceive his*

*audience, stretching his neck and standing on tip-toe, resigns himself to talking into an immense horn that is offered him by a gentleman much resembling the LABOUR MASTER, who stands beside DEAN in pulpit. The DEAN has thus rather the air of one making Channel-crossing, waited on by an attentive steward.)*

THE DEAN OF WESTMINSTER :

Brethren ! The text of this my sermon on  
Our dear departed sinner's taken from  
Corinthians one fifteen.

VARIOUS ELECTRICAL APPARATUS :

Buzz-a-buzz ! Buzz ! Buzz !

TYPEWRITERS AND TELEGRAPH KEYBOARDS :

Wuck ! Wuck-a-Wuck ! Wuck ! Wuck !  
Wuck !

DEAN :

*Be not deceived,  
Evil communications corrupt  
Good manners. Ah ! how true ! How aptly  
Paul  
Envisaged Poets when he wrote those words :  
Our Modern Poets of a graceless age.  
How other were the classics : Goethe, Pope,  
Our Swan of Avon, Herrick, Marvell, Heber,  
Goldsmith. . . .*

*(Buzz-Buzz-Buzzy ! Buzz ! Wuck ! Wuck ! Wucky ! " A Little  
louder, Dean."*

*" Daily Tribune boy, where the devil have you got to ? ")*

DEAN :

Boccaccio who sired our Swan ! !

*(Who was the fellow we're here about ?*

*A poet, I think, Your Highness. I am not certain.*

*(An enormous burst of super-magnesium light.)*

*Oh ! Damn ! I'm blinded ! Why in thunder did you bring  
me to this beastly place ? I regret, Excellency !)*

DEAN :

And . . .

**VOICE :** If the very Reverend the Dean  
Would speak a little louder. We supply  
Eleven million and a half ten-pound  
Subscribers !!

**DEAN :**

Poetry ! Blest offspring of  
The Muse was always held most high in honour  
In our fair Land ; and honour-giving poets  
Have given our Land great honour and the  
name :  
“ Blest nest of Singing Birds ! ” Or to quote  
Our Mr. Bulfin, our unrivalled. . . .

### VARIOUS APPARATUS :

**Wuck ! Wuck-wuck-wuck-Wucky ! Wuck !!**

**OTHERS :** Buzz-a-Click !

**INSTRUMENTS :** Click ! Sizzle ! Sizzle ! Zizzle !

*(Unparalleled enthusiasm on the part of all machines, MR. BULFIN in his stage-box resembles, his waistcoat parting from his trousers, an orchestral conductor during an Allegro prestissimo.)*

DEAN :

Bulfin,

To whom in these degenerate days our land,  
This little plot of earth, this England, owes  
So much ; this noble Mr. Bulfin, he  
Whose Truth's unquestioned, whose industrious  
pen  
Rivalling those great quills of Samuel Johnson,  
Dickens, Keats, Thackeray, and William  
Hazlitt. . . .

But to return to this our brother here

*(Sudden silence of all machines.)*

Untimely gone ; we ask ourselves when poets  
Are under question : Firstly, *Was his Muse*  
*Sober or Jocund ?* Second, *Was his life*  
*Jocund or chaste ?* (The epithets are Herrick's :

A clergyman's !) Thirdly we ask ourselves :  
*How stands he in the estimate of the world*  
*As versifier, imagist, in short*  
*As poet ?* I myself a humble cleric  
Deep-buried in a heavy enterprise

(The restorations  
Of this historic fane call for at least  
Three-quarter million pounds). In my hotter  
youth

None than myself did ever hotlier chase  
The products of the Muse. But passing years :  
The heavy, heavy years and gravity  
Encroach on the mind. Who in his middle  
life

Can pass in literary pleasancess  
Even a few waste hours ? Our occupations  
Then thronging thick and fast preclude the  
mind

From toying thoughts and Lalage in the shade,  
*Sub tegmine fagi : Eheu Posthume !*

Our poor departed brother then was one  
Of whom in person I knew very little.

But : *Did he in the estimate of the World*  
*Stand high ?* Oh, quiet, listening friends, he  
stood

Most high ! I am assured by Mr. Bulfin—

(*Wuck ! Wuck ! Wuck ! Sizzle ! Sizzle ! Six. Click-Click !*  
*Click-Click !!*)

And sure no heart more truthful ever spoke  
The deep-toned words of wiseness ; none  
than he

Did ever soundlier appraise a people's  
Deep estimations :

I am assured by Mr. Bulfin, then,  
 No poet's words throughout this mighty world  
 Are priced and prized more high in America,  
 That sister-cousin of our far-flung seed—  
 And let me here break off . . . : I lose myself  
 In contemplation of these storied aisles :  
 Here Shakespeare trod and here did Cromwell  
 walk ;

Milton sat here a child ; here Chatham prayed ;  
 Here is sepultured England's storied past !

Now then comes England's poet !  
 He hath outsoared our narrow island's bounds,  
 His books all borne to farther Western shores !  
 That is indubitable ! That stamps him great !  
 Dearer than Milton ; priced above Keats  
 He comes to lay his wearied dust in here  
 Where Chaucer worshipped and where Spenser  
 prayed !

What does England need  
 More than a poet leaving naught behind ?  
 And Mr. Bulfin tells me, on his honour,  
 That not one word in manuscript or print  
 Of this great poet—not one word in type  
 Or writing at dictation, lives to call forth  
 The maiden's blush, in England ! The youngest  
 Person

May go with Him—with what of Him  
 remains !—

To her pure chamber and rest unpolluted !  
 He hath outsoared all grossness ; He alone  
 Alone among the poets of our land  
 Banquets immaculate. Our greatest, last !  
 Our greatest ! Purest ! Last ! In truth, the  
 Last. . . .

For he's the last shall ever be brought here  
 To lie in our tiny hallowed Poet's Corner  
 That now is fitted up with deathless dust.  
 I've prayed for guidance as to the bestowal  
 Of these last sacred inches ; dreadful trust :  
 To guard the storied purlieus of this fane  
 Where Shakespeare prayed and Bacon thought  
 on science

From the intrusion of all sacrilegious  
 And prurient dust ! But, now, ah now !  
 All's well !

All's well with England and her storied shrine !  
 England's Last Poet is impeccable !  
 Purest, most great and last ! Hail and Farewell !

*(The machines of MR. BULFIN and of the Associated Publicity Association Limited have long left Sacred Building, it having appeared unlikely that the DEAN would further eulogise MR. BULFIN. The DEAN becomes fully visible to the audience. Round his head is a very—a very—large circular halo, an illusion caused no doubt by a rose-window.*

*In this circle are seen, running very fast, side by side and with long shadows depending from them : THE SOUTHERN MUSE, ARLEQUIN, and MISTER BOSPHORUS. They reach some very tall and feathery birch-trees (or they may be poplars) and cast themselves down on the sands.*

*Very slowly POET'S CORNER fades away to the regimental quick-steps of departing troops. THE WELCH, being, so fate wills these things, invariably the last to get away, play :*

*For 't is my delight of a moonshiny night  
 At the season of the year.*

*The old tune of the Lincolnshire Poacher remaining thus on the ear.)*  
 As WESTMINSTER ABBEY fades, SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE  
 grows larger and larger and LARGER.

## SCENE THE LAST

### CODA

SOUTHERN MUSE, ARLEQUIN, and MISTER BOSPHORUS

*(They recline on tepid sands.)*

BOSPHORUS : I do not need : I do not need, my soul !  
To doubt my senses !

SOUTHERN MUSE : You have done with doubts !  
With Time and Winter and the peradventure  
Of uncertain Springs ; and you have toiled  
enough  
With the hard world ; so now your moments  
flow  
With the soft cadence of the Hesperides  
And the long leisure of a dying verse  
Melting upon the ear and yet not gone.

A FAINT ECHO : *A . . . a . . . Ah . . . delight of a shiny night  
At the season of the year.*

BOSPHORUS : How softly comes the voice of the noisy world :  
Still fainter and more faint. . . .

ARLEQUIN (*he hums*) : *Of a shiny night  
With the planets still and clear.*

BOSPHORUS : Lo ! On sands like these and with friends  
like these  
At all seasons of the year  
We may take our ease down the centuries  
A-lying beside our dear !

SOUTHERN MUSE : And the world shall turn and the white moon  
burn

And the stars come out to hear ;  
And the leaves on the trees may listen at ease  
To the song he sings in my ear !

ARLEQUIN : Let the old world spin until Time begin  
Again his course, my sister. . . .

SOUTHERN MUSE : Shall her locks entwine with the leaf of the  
vine,  
Blessing the day he kist her !

NINE FAINT VOICES :

Stagger on the track ! We will never go back !

ARLEQUIN : We are here, ah, ye fainting pursuers !

S. M. (*to Bos.*) : Let them chorus you ! 'Tis not much to do  
For the mildest of mild Muse-wooers !

BOSPHORUS : I would well I ween what you would, oh  
Queen,  
Though you called up the rats from the  
sewers !

*Nine long shadows are visible in the faint distance. They wave crook-  
handled sticks hopefully but without vigour.*

ARLEQUIN : The immortality  
Provided by the Gods is infinite  
And infinitely various. (*Calling*) Hither !  
Here !

Turn your sore feet towards these feathered  
trees :

Then lie in the sand and listen at your ease.

BOSPHORUS : Warm sand to write on, and a yielding  
breast !

A thousand years to write in ! Say ten  
thousand !

A million years to write in ; and no cold !

No hindrance! Just to write! And kiss!  
And write!

Why, on the surface of these blanchèd sands  
In characters legible in Orion's belt  
I'll write such love and wisdom!

SOUTHERN MUSE :

Ah! My Lord!

Thy servant has contrived the best she might :

BOSPHORUS :

Why, 'tis enough!

ARLEQUIN :

This is the first of poets

To utter those brave words!

BOSPHORUS :

This is of men the first

To be so blessèd by your sister's love!

And 'tis sufficient! I could write such things  
As would amaze the moon!

SOUTHERN MUSE :

Do thou but that

And I'll forgive thee all my virgin pangs!

BOSPHORUS :

Warmth! Love and warmth! Why then

. . . Let's set it down!

THE NINE YOUNG GENTLEMEN (*arriving, softly*)

The Gods to each ascribe a various lot :

He rifles her warm bosom. We must not!

ARLEQUIN :

The Gods view each with various intent :

This poet's words are subtle, subtly blent ;

And melt upon the ear : all your accomplish-  
ment,

Though sweating for ten years to it you went.

Were not the tithe of his! Be ye content!

To lie i' the sand and listen!

THE NINE :

We're content!

We're very well content!

(*The curtain falls.*)

SUSSEX : October 1922—

TARASCON : June 1923.



90. 1111  
1111111111



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY  
BERKELEY

Return to desk from which borrowed.  
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

11 Dec '50 BZ

13 Mar '51 CD

6 Jun '51 LI

17 Jan '58

REC'D LD

APR 4 1958

FEB 5 1968 33

RECEIVED

MAR 20 '68 -11 AM

LD 21-067-11, 49 (B7146s16)476  
LOAN DEPT.



C031109039

888064

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

